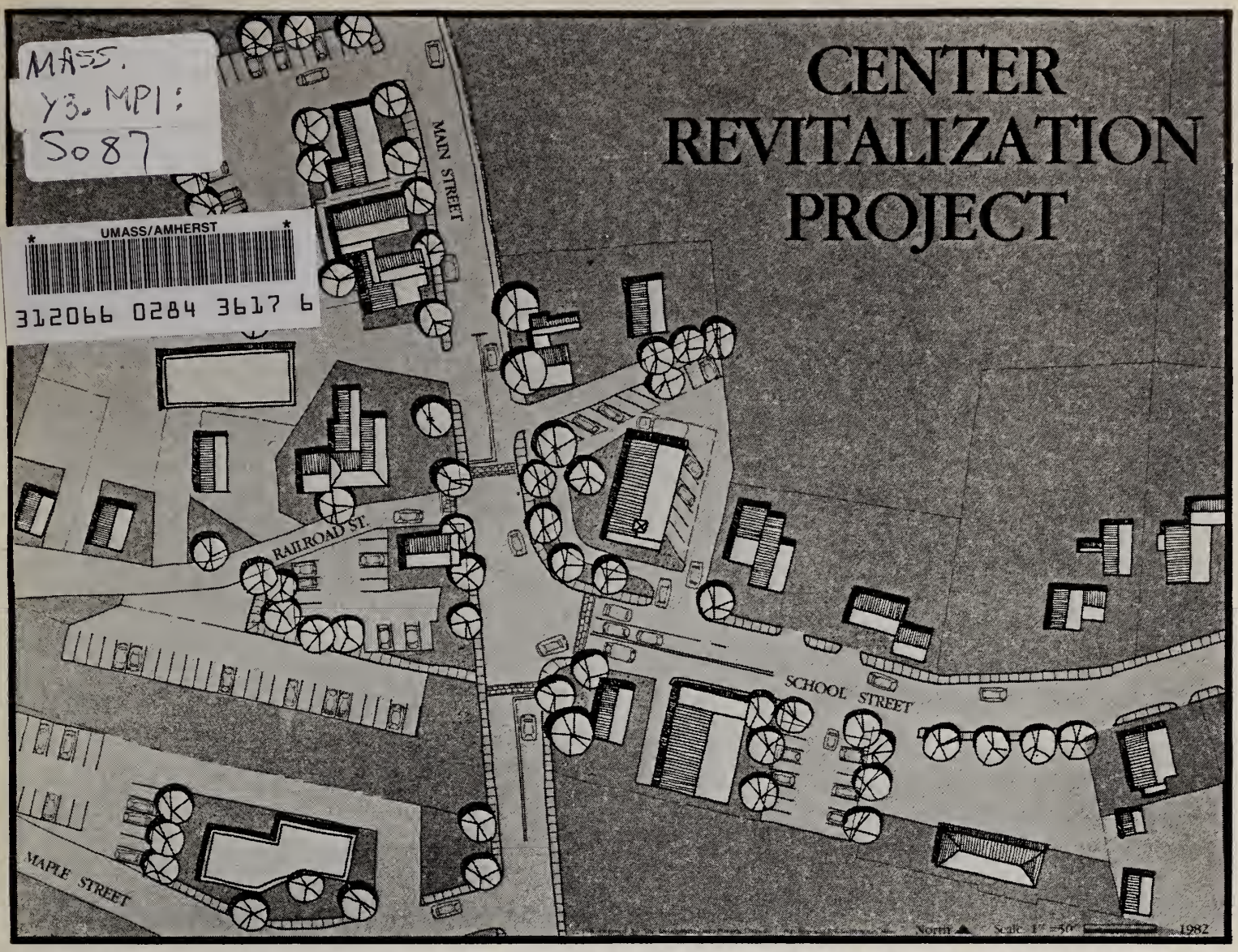
CENTER REVITALIZATION PROJECT



SOUTH ACTON

INCORPORATED 1735 ACTON

TECHNICAL REPORT

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

August 1982

METROPOLITAN AREA
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

South Acton Revitalization Project: Technical Memorandum was prepared by the by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council for the town of Acton. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is the officially designated regional-planning agency for 101 cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan area. The Council helps its member communities plan in the areas of land use, environmental quality, solid waste, hazardous materials, air quality, housing, economic development, and transportation.

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INTRODUCTION

Improved highway systems and the emergence of shopping malls and industrial parks have altered shopping and commuting throughout New England, and have created economic shifts too. Community centers, traditionally the hub of local commercial, industrial, and government activity, have suffered economically as a result. Recognizing the importance of city and town centers to both the identity and the economic stability of individual communities and to the region as a whole, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has developed a program for downtown revival called Center Revitalization.

Through the Council's 1981 annual solicitation of technical-assistance projects, MAPC accepted a request from the town of Acton for assistance in developing such a plan for South Acton village. The objectives of this plan include: improvement in economic conditions in the Center; improvement in the appearance and functioning of the Center as a place to do business, and live; and improvements in traffic and parking conditions. To aid in planning, a task force of South Acton residents and merchants was formed.

Below is a summary of project recommendations followed by the technical memorandum which the Council developed over the course of the project. Committee minutes are in the Appendix and detail the process by which recommendations for the revitalization of South Acton were developed.

SUMMARY

Assets/Problems/Future Goals

As a first step in the South Acton revitalization project, the committee determined what the Center's assets and problems were. The committee then decided on possible future uses for South Acton. Below is a summary of those items.

Assets

- Charming village center, pleasant surroundings, Great Hill recreational area
- Historic buildings
- Residential and business community interested in revitalization
- Strong local government
- Diversity of income levels
- River as potential source of power and recreation

Problems

- Traffic, dangerous intersections, congestion
- Insufficient parking
- Septic problems
- Visually deteriorating area due to lack of building maintenance and poorly designed signs and building facades.

Future Goals

- Mixture of village businesses, offices and residential use
- Emphasis on preserving the historic character of the Center

Although there are many issues that the community must deal with in its revitalization efforts, there is one that stands out - the development of a "sense of place." Despite distinctive, historic structures, stately old trees, commercial potential of a heavily traveled commuter route, and an increasing growing area, South Acton Center has failed to develop a clear commercial identity. It is this problem that has been the focus of this plan.

The MAPC studies have all been directed towards the creation of a sense of place in South Acton and the creation of a memorable ambiance compatible with its historic character and commercial desires. It has become clear in the course of studies that South Acton will never be a totally self-sufficient bustling center of commercial activity--there is too much nearby competition, too many obstacles to development. But the center can attract and hold a modest commercial base, serving primarily local needs, and provide office space for a larger area. The following subject-summaries illustrate how this might be achieved.

WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

The question of wastewater disposal has been raised repeatedly as a determinant of the nature and amount of development in South Acton. Older septic systems, relatively impermeable soil and high groundwater levels contribute to South Acton's wastewater disposal problems. Such problems affect development potential to some extent, but MAPC's examination of the issue suggests that properly sized and maintained on-site septic systems with adequate groundwater control should accommodate most types of business and residential development. The important exception to this is restaurants, as they produce large wastewater flows. Through careful site selection, however, a restaurant could be accommodated in South Acton.

Due to the high cost of sewer alternatives and their lack of impact on development potential, the current reliance on on-site septic systems should be retained. The reliability of this approach may be enhanced in the future, if desired, through relatively low-cost approaches such as an up-hill interceptor trench for groundwater control.

TRAFFIC

South Acton's two dominant traffic features are the railroad bridge on Main Street and the intersection at School Street and Main Street. In response to concerns about safety and traffic circulation, MAPC analyzed existing conditions at these two locations.

The major parites concerned with the fate of the railroad bridge, the town, the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (MDPW) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) all agree that current conditions are unsatisfactory. MAPC believes that a grade-crossing proposal to solve the bridge problems cannot be pursued successfully in light of MDPW and MBTA opposition. The Council therefore recommends that the existing bridge be rebuilt.

Existing conditions at the intersection of School Street and Main Street are characterized by high traffic volumes, difficult turning movements and a lack of intersection definition. Traffic volumes on these two streets meet the warrants required for the installation of traffic signals. A signalized, re-designed intersection would improve traffic flow, turning movements and pedestrian access throughout the area. Together with the proposed bridge improvements, a signalized intersection would dramatically improve traffic conditions in South Acton. (See "Summary of Recommendations" memorandum for recommended intersection design.)

PARKING

Well-designed and adequate parking is critical to the success of a commercial area. In South Acton, parking is limited and in most places poorly designed.

MAPC recommends additional parking at several sites in South Acton. The re-design of existing, private lots would improve their efficiency and appearance. The development of a public lot near the Center would supply the additional parking currently in demand and would also allow for future business expansion. Long-term parkers, like employees, should be encouraged to use less-convenient spaces, leaving closer spots for customers. Any new development should be required to provide both adequate and attractive parking. (See "Summary of Recommendations" memorandum for recommended parking lot designs.)

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The existence of many older buildings which qualify for rehabilitation tax incentives under the Economic Recovery Act is an economic asset to South Acton. Growing population, income and employment levels in the town are also positive economic indicators. Commercial growth potential in South Acton is limited, however, by nearby competition, lack of developable land, sewer and wetland restrictions, and South Acton's relatively isolated location.

The Council recommends that, to maintain the area as a small commercial center, South Acton concentrate on historic district designation to maximize rehabilitation tax incentives. MAPC also suggests the development of office space in existing buildings, and limited retail development in the areas of convenience goods and specialty shops that cater to the type of customer now coming to South Acton.

LAND USE

Traffic, parking and economic recommendations, of course, are all part of a land-use analysis. Several recommendations in each of these areas have already been made. Additional land use recommendations include:

- Converting the vacant railroad station into a productive use, possibly a municipal use.

- Encouraging commercial or office space in all buildings surrounding the intersection.

- Encouraging first-floor development of the large building between the old railroad station and the Civil Defense building. Top floor could remain residential.

- Maintain as long-term golas the development of Jones Tavern and the development of the corner of Maple and Main Streets.

URBAN DESIGN

Most important to the success of all the above recommendations are design improvements to the Center. South Acton currently lacks a "sense of place." Storefront facades have no common theme or visual unity; there is a lack of pedestrian amenities such as crosswalks and benches; and there is little landscaping.

The Council recommends that South Acton concentrate on two areas of urban design - visual image and pedestrian circulation - to improve the functioning and marketability of the Center.

Through the use of appropriate paving materials, storefront design, signs and amenities, the overall visual image of South Acton could be improved. Such improvements should accentuate the historic character of the village center. By providing dynamic landscaping, like flowering trees, and distinctive lighting, South Acton would become a more memorable and pleasant place to visit. Design and landscaping emphasis at the intersection of Main Street and School Street would make this area a focal point, something currently missing in South Acton. And lastly, better overall maintenance is key to enhancing the visual quality of the Center.

Pedestrian circulation in South Acton must also be improved. Safe, convenient sidewalks and crossings should be provided as well as convenient and attractive pedestrian access to parking lots. Benches, trash receptacles, lighting and landscaping are also the kind of amenities needed to make the commercial environment in South Acton more pleasant.

CONCLUSION

These traffic, parking, economic, land use and urban design recommendations, if implemented, would greatly improve both the appearance and economic viability of South Acton. Further details on these recommendations follow in the Technical Memoranda section as does a summary of funding programs for implementation.

This planning report is only the first step in the long revitalization process. The project's ultimate success - the improvement of South Acton - depends on the cooperative efforts of the town, local merchants and the South Acton Revitalization Committee. Together, these groups must work toward implementing recommendations.

TECHNICAL DATA

October 21, 1982

Memorandum

TO: South Acton Revitalization Committee
FROM: Robbin Peach
SUBJ: Assets and Problems

Please review the following summary of existing problems, assets, and issues as I see them, for South Acton Center. The success of the center's revitalization will be directly related to our ability to correctly define South Acton's problems and focus on our priorities. Therefore, please consider this list carefully and make any changes or additions you think necessary.

Thank you.

Assets

. South Acton is a small, charming village center.
. South Acton is close to a major shopping district (West Acton, and Maynard).
. South Acton has pleasant natural surroundings.
. The historic buildings in South Acton surrounding Quimby Square have great potential for renovation.
. The residential and business community of South Acton is interested in revitalizing the town center.
. A strong local government exists for the center.

Problems

* Traffic - the road alignment presents dangerous intersections and traffic congestion exists at peak hours.
* Parking is insufficient for some of the center's buildings.
* The center has restricting septic problems.
* South Acton Center is visually deteriorating due to lack of maintenance on existing buildings, poorly designed facades and signs on some buildings, and underutilization of a few buildings.

Other Potential Issues: (Asset or Problem?)

* The commuter parking lot
* The River/Pond
* Recreation/ Open Space land
* Commercial center (vs residential vs office services)
* Historic preservation.

October 28, 1981

Memorandum

To: South Acton Revitalization Committee
Fr: Michael Oman, MAPC
Re: Wastewater Disposal

The question of wastewater disposal has been raised repeatedly as a major determinant of the nature and amount of development in South Acton. Failing septic systems have been thought to represent an existing problem that must be addressed for health and aesthetic reasons and the limitations of the soils and groundwater for new systems have appeared to limit new development. This concern has been reflected in a "201 Facilities Plan" study in which Anderson Nichols surveyed the entire town and singled South Acton out for special consideration.

As a result of these concerns the MAPC center revitalization effort has identified this problem as an important starting point in its study. Existing conditions and options for their improvement have been examined with special emphasis on their implications for future commercial activity in the area.

Existing Conditions

South Acton center is an older commercial area that once drew its health and vitality from the railroad. It grew up in an era in which large houses were built on small lots as close to the depot as possible. The overflow of raw sewage from malfunctioning cesspools into the nearby brook was not considered a problem.

These conditions are compounded by difficult geological circumstances. Most of the South Acton area is built on tight, relatively impermeable soil deposited by the glacier. The entire area suffers from high groundwater levels due to subsurface drainage from the nearby hill. Combined with the older systems on small lots, these conditions have led to an abnormally high frequency of failing systems and repairs in the past. It is this high frequency which has resulted in the perception of South Acton as a problem area.

In addition to the existing problems, the effect of septic difficulties on potential development remains to be considered. In general, developers prefer to work in sewered areas, especially if the project entails redevelopment of an older structure. Failing that, potential septic problems exert a distinct chilling effect on development enthusiasm as developers contemplate continuing and expensive repairs and mortgage money becomes scarce.

Past Proposals

Work in the South Acton area in the past has concentrated on alleviating existing problems. The Anderson-Nichols "Step One Facilities Plan" singled out South Acton from the rest of the town for special attention due to the unusual severity of its apparent problems. Three approaches to solving the problem were examined: two local sewer options and a repair and maintenance of existing septic systems option. The sewer options covered, one, a pressure sewer pumping septic tank effluent to a community leaching area; and, two, a pressure sewer using grinder pumps to feed a community septic tank and leach field. Only twenty of the most seriously affected units were to be connected to these systems. All three alternatives included the construction of a groundwater control trench uphill of the affected units.

These three alternatives were examined for cost effectiveness in responding to the area's problems. The initial analysis showed the grinder pump alternative to be considerably more expensive than the simple pressure sewer due to the cost of the grinder pumps themselves and the additional expense of large community septic tanks. Since it provided no additional apparent benefits it was discarded.

The pressure sewer alternative was found to have substantial costs for the connected units. Even after a large Federal contribution, annual costs to the connected units were found to be $635 over the estimated ten year payback period. Costs to the other, unconnected units for groundwater control ammounted to $554 per unit total.

It was found that the annual costs in the case of the pressure sewer were extremely high, largely due to the difficulty of obtaining suitable leaching area. As a result of this high cost and a subsequent field examination by the engineers and health officials the attractiveness of this solution was substantially diminished as opposed to a vigorous program of maintenance and repair, perhaps coupled with better groundwater control.

Wastewater and Development

The previous work, although necessary and important, has essentially ignored the role of wastewater disposal in constraining or encouraging development. To more fully explore this aspect of the problem, an additional alternative has been examined that provides for additional commercial capacity and distributes the costs of its implementation and maintenance over a larger number of units.

The approach selected for this examination consisted of conventional gravity sewers, pump to a package secondary treatment plant and disposal of effluent to surface waters or subsurface as required. Both effluent disposal techniques were considered since surface disposal is less expensive but would be more difficult to permit. The system was sized to cover approximately eighty units with a capacity of 30,000 gallons per day. It was felt that by distributing the cost of such a system over a greater number of units, the unit cost could be reduced, despite the provision of secondary treatment capacity.

It was found that this was indeed the case, but that today's high interest rates resulted in a very poor performance for such a capital intensive system overall. Over the estimated ten year payback at today's interest rates the annual cost per unit was found to be $389 for surface disposal and $526 for subsurface disposal. Groundwater control would be unnecessary under this alternative since all units would be connected. It should be pointed out that these figures are very preliminary and for comparison purposes only.

Wastewater and South Acton

Although sewers provide the surest and most definitive method of enhancing development opportunities, they are also expensive. Additional research suggests they may also not be entirely necessary.

South Acton has experienced an unusually high number of septic system failures and repairs. Although some problems continue to exist, these appear not to be associated with repaired systems. Of the systems repaired in the past ten to twelve years not one has filed since. This suggests that the apparent problems are more often due to the age of existing systems and to older designs than to an innate incapacity for septic systems to provide adequate wastewater treatment. This is particularly true in cases where groundwater control may be provided as well.

Initial reconnaissance suggests that reliance on on-site systems will result in minimal limitations on development. In general, office and most retail uses result in lower wastewater flows than residences. It would appear that adequately sized and maintined on-site septic systems with adequate groundwater control should be able to accommodate most types of business/commercial development desired in the area. The only important exception to this is for restaurants which would usually be associated with more intense office or commercial use and would produce substantially greater wastewater flows. This would necessitate greater care in site selection for this type of use but does not eliminate its possibility.

It would appear, therefore, that due to the high cost of capital (sewer) alternatives and their lack of impact on actual development potential, the current reliance on on-site septic systems should be retained. The reliability of this approach may be enhanced in the future if desired through relatively low-cost approaches such as the up-hill interceptor trench for groundwater control.

Appendix: Basis of cost comparisons for gravity sewer alternatives

Basic assumptions: 80 units served, population 280
total residential flow = 16,000 gpd, assume 20,000 for res & comm.
size system = 30,000 gpd for I & I
assume 80% Federal reimbursement, 15% interest, 10 year payback.

Basic System:

Capital:		O & M	
Interceptor 5000 lf @ $12	= 60,000	Package plnt @ 10%	= 15,000
SMH 18@ $800 =	= 14,400	Lift station	= 1,000
Lift sta - one ls	= 30,000	annual	= 16,000
House connections 80@ $600	= 48,000		
Package plant - one	=150,000		
	302,400		
+ 25% impl.	76,000		
	378,000 - local share @ 20% = 76,000		

Leach Field: O & M: 5,000 annual

capital:	60,000 sq.ft. @ 2.00 =	$120,000
	impl @ 25% =	30,000
		$150,000 - local share @ 20% = 30,000

Annual cost:
Basic - Capital @ 15% & O&M = 15,100 + 16,000 = $31,100 or $388.75/unit.
w/leach - Capital @ 15% & O&M = 21,100 + 21,000 = $42,100 or $526.25/unit.

January 12, 1982

Memorandum

TO: South Acton Revitalization Committee
FROM: Mark Siegenthaler, MAPC
SUBJ: Traffic Analysis

Current traffic patterns and characteristics play an influential role in any community's revitalization efforts. In South Acton, the two dominant traffic features are the railroad bridge on Main St. (actually a series of three bridges), and the intersection at School St. and Main St. In response to concerns about safety and traffic circulation, MAPC has analyzed existing conditions at these two locations, resulting in recommended actions for improvements.

Main St. Railroad Bridges

The major parties concerned with the fate of these bridges, the town, the MDPW and the MBTA all agree that current conditions are unsatisfactory. The two railroad bridges are in poor physical condition, are poorly graded and create potentially hazardous conditions in adjacent intersections. Figure 1 illustrates the grading profile and indicates sight line problems creating hazardous traffic conditions. In addition, the bridges are not clearly visible from the south creating situations where drivers suddenly come upon the bridges at excessive speeds. The combination of these factors creates an unsatisfactory traffic situation in which clear sight lines, safe speeds and control cannot be maintained.

Although there is agreement as to the unsatisfactory road conditions, there are conflicting proposals to remedy the situation. The tracks below the bridges carry at least 32 trains per day according to the MBTA commuter and B & M Freight schedules. Currently, the bridges do not meet the minimum 18 foot clearance standards. This has led to a proposal by the MBTA for reconstruction of the bridges, raising them to an optimum height of 22½ feet. This would require raising Main St., High St. and School Street, possibly involving building relocation and demolition.

Another proposal calls for the elimination of the bridges, replacing them with a grade crossing. This local sentiment for removal lies in general feelings of dissatisfaction with current conditions, and an effort to restore South Acton to its original configuration. The existing bridges, built in 1906, replaced a grade crossing.

The MDPW is responsible for the bridges. Both the MBTA and the MDPW oppose the grade crossing proposal. However, the MDPW is studying alternatives for reconstruction including plans less drastic than the MBTA proposal.

MAPC believes that a grade crossing proposal cannot be pursued successfully. Plans involving a grade crossing will be rendered academic by staunch opposition, yet improvements for existing conditions must be developed. Bridge reconstruction plans which will improve current conditions can be developed as an alternative to the MBTA proposal for raising the bridges and recommendations follow in the last section of this memo.

Main St./School St. Intersection

Existing conditions at this intersection are characterized by high volumes, difficult turning movements and a lack of intersection definition. Figure 2 illustrates average daily volume figures for the intersection. The high peaks at both early morning and evening rush hours indicate the heavy influence of commuter traffic. Figure 3 illustrates turning movements at the peak hour of the day. The high number of cars entering from School Street causes delays and confusion. The overall size of the intersection, the number of cars entering Main Street and the lack of definition often results in accidents. Figure 4 summarizes the accidents at the intersection within the last two years.

The effects of high volumes and turning movements combined with the large undefined intersection results in a poorly operating traffic pattern. Improvement proposals should be sought which include re-design and definition of travel lanes and turning areas. The addition of a traffic signal would allow safer, unobstructed turns and controlled flow.

Traffic Recommendations

MAPC recommends that the committee pursue bridge reconstruction plans that will regrade the existing bridges, and intersection plans that will re-design and signalize School Street and Main Street.

The MDPW is currently reviewing an engineering report analyzing bridge replacement options. This report concludes that while four replacement options are feasible, the MBTA proposal to raise the bridges would result in unacceptable impacts on South Acton. The report also states that the physical condition of the bridges precludes a no-build option. Thus, the committee can accept the presence of the bridges and affect the reconstruction plans by supporting an option with favorable grading proposals. Figure 5 illustrates the two recommended reconstruction/grading plans. The grading in both options involves only the bridges and not the High St. or School St. intersections. Figure 6 describes the two options in detail.

In addition, the traffic volumes on Main Street and School Street meet the warrants required for installation of traffic signals. Although design of the intersection is not complete, a traffic signal, visible from the other side of the bridges could be placed at School St. and Main St. (See figure 5). The signalized, re-designed intersection would provide improved flow, turning movements and pedestrian access throughout the area.

The proposed bridge reconstruction/grading and the signalized intersection will dramatically improve traffic conditions in South Acton. The bridge improvements will improve sight lines and control, while signalization will provide safer turning movements and pedestrian access.

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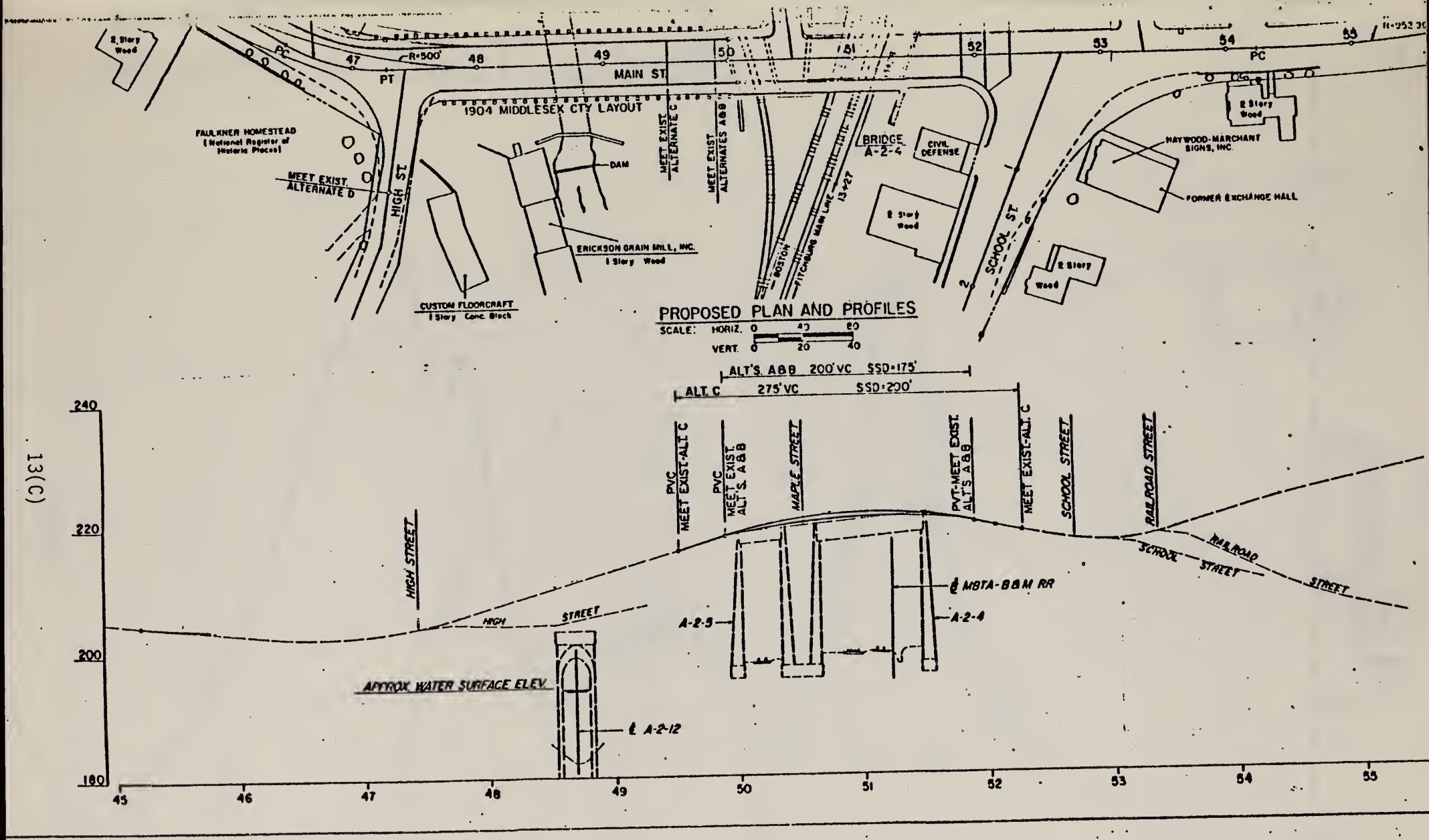
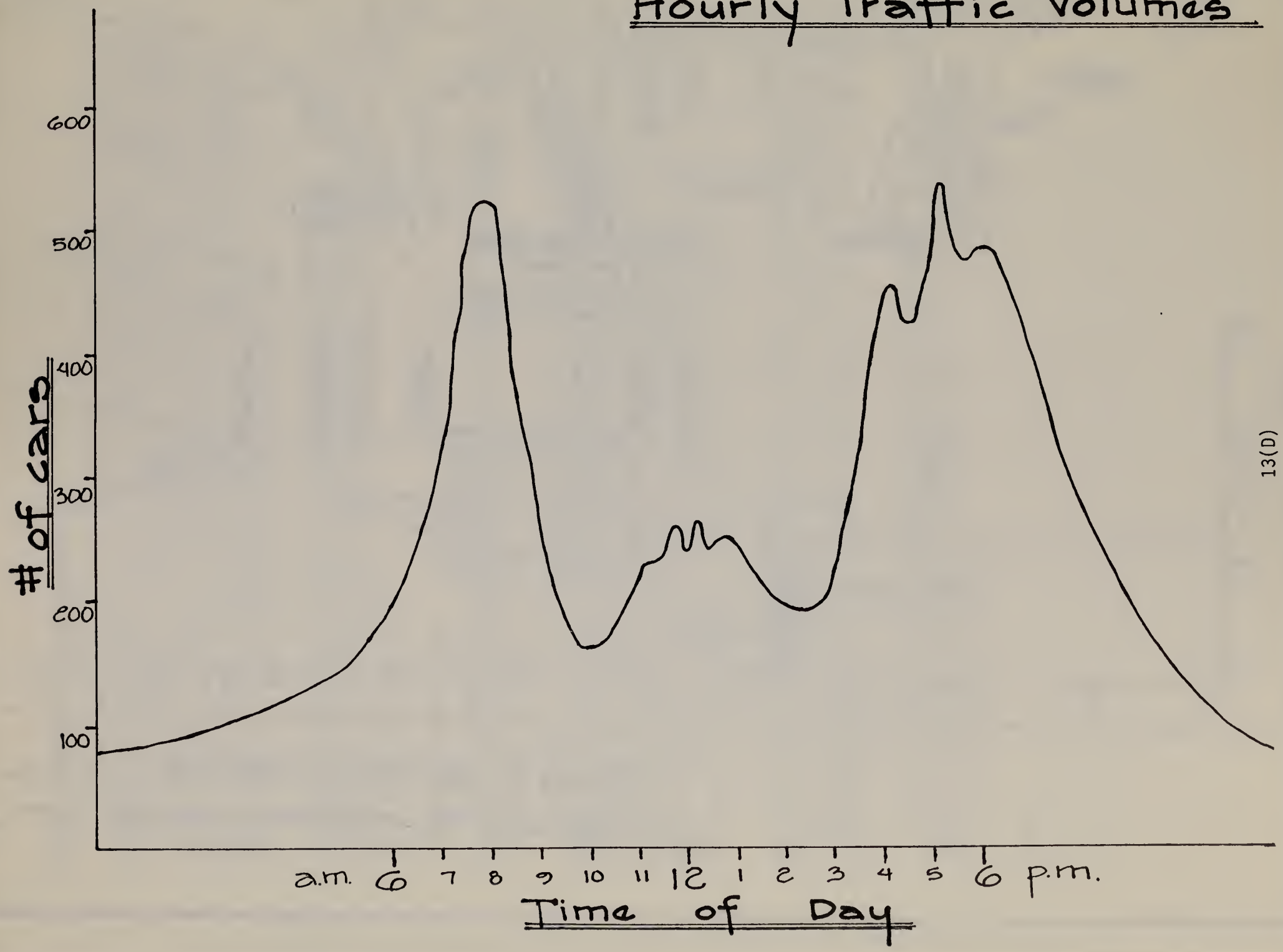


FIGURE #1 EXISTING PROFILE - - - -

FIGURE #5 RECOMMENDED PROFILE ~~~

FIGURE # 2

Hourly Traffic Volumes



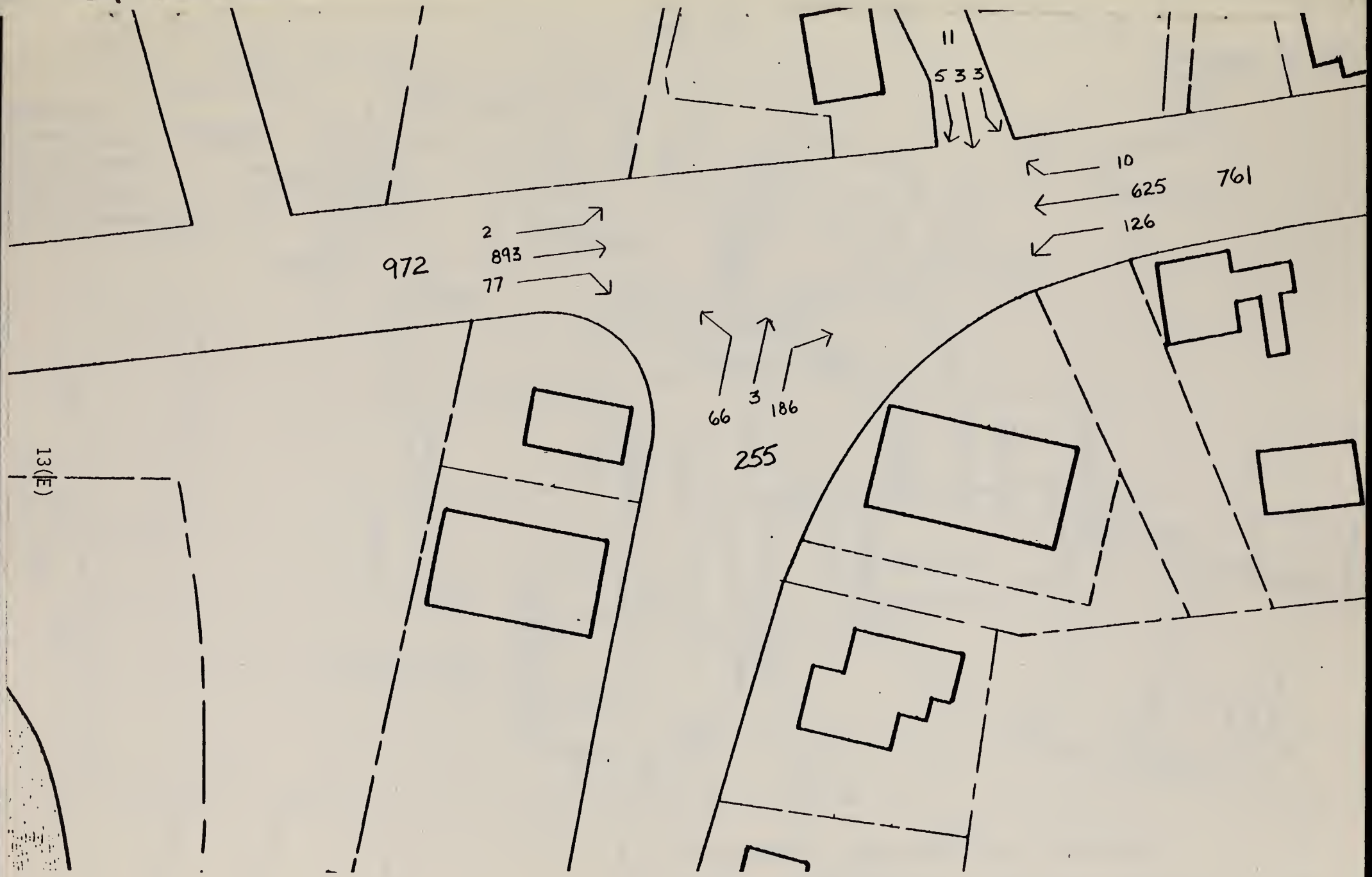


FIGURE # 3

Peak Hour Turning Movement

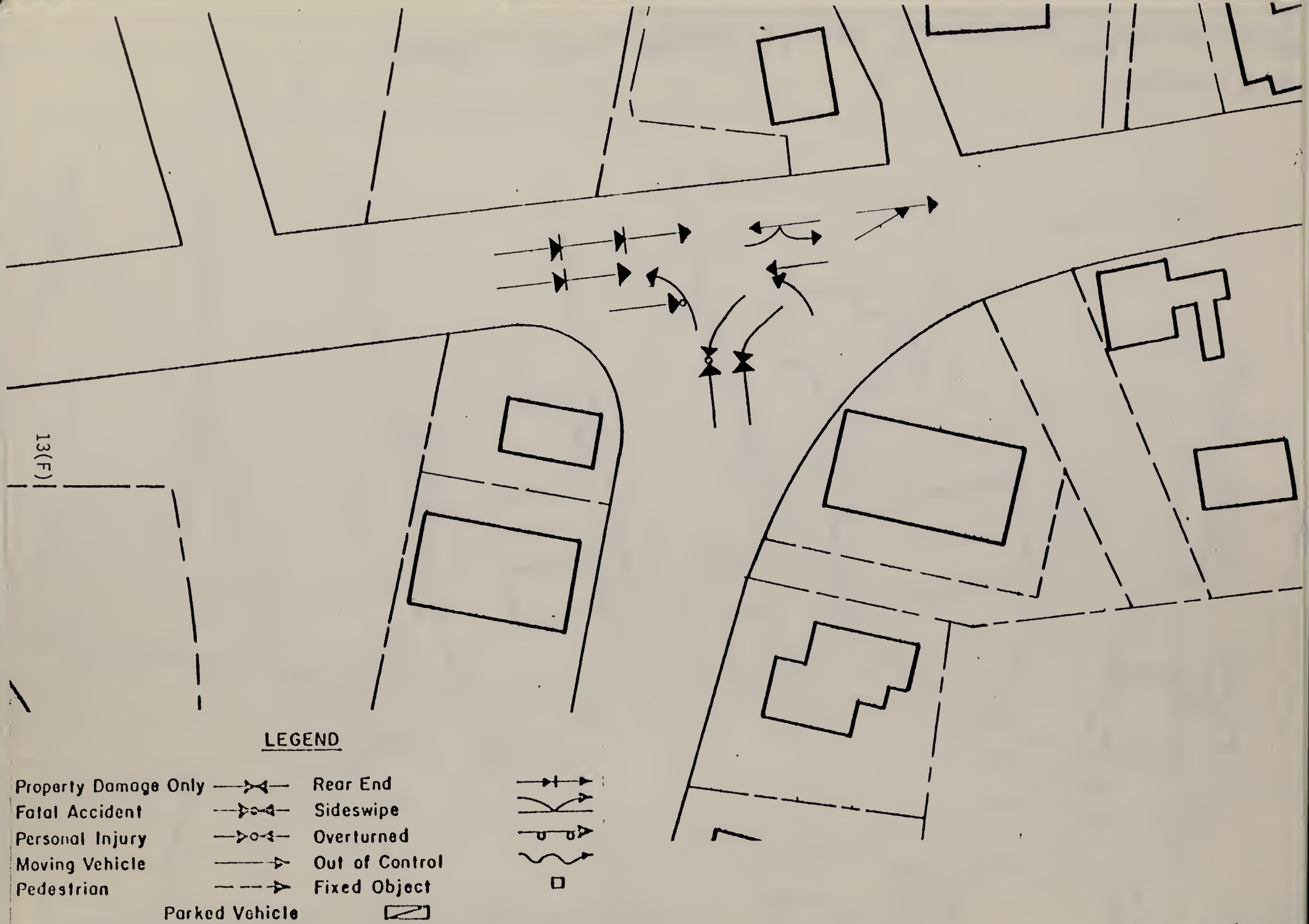


FIGURE # 4

Two-year Accident Summary

Two-year Accident Summary

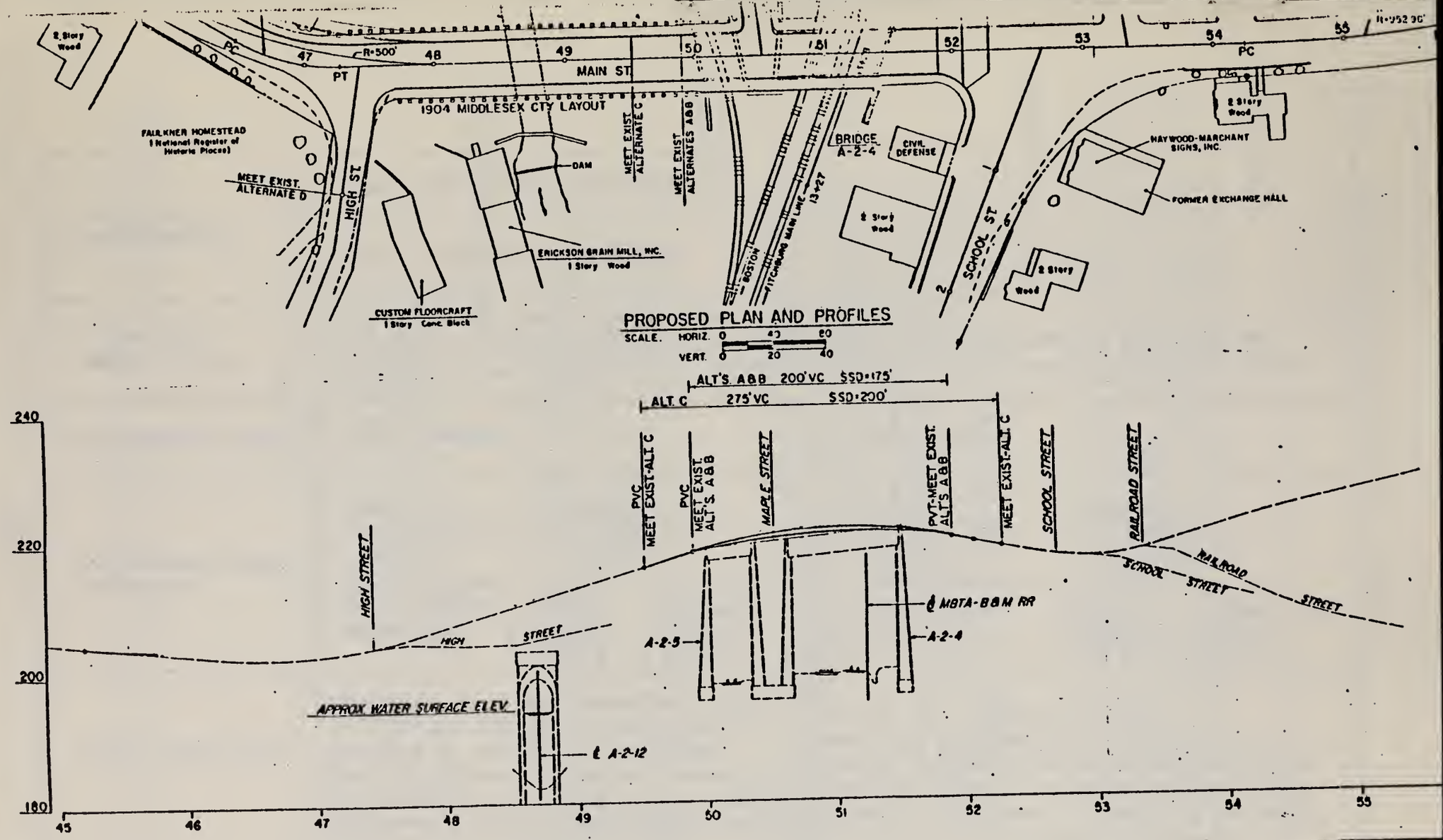


FIGURE #1 EXISTING PROFILE - - - -

FIGURE #5 RECOMMENDED PROFILE ~~~

13(G)

FIGURE # 6

Reconstruction Options

	ALTERNATE C	ALTERNATE B
BRIEF DESCRIPTION	Construct a 275-ft.,30-mph crest vertical curve over railroad tracks, replace both structures on existing abutments; A-2-4 to be 2-spans with new pier, increase Fitchburg Main Line vertical clearance to 18'-0" (MBTA criterion).	Similar to Alternate A except a new south abutment would be constructed for bridge A-2-4. Reduced span length allows for increasing Fitchburg Main Line clearance to to 18'-0" (MBTA criterion).
ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COSTS	A-2-4 / A-2-5 Demolition: $ 30,000 / $ 10,000 Substructure: 80,000 / 20,000 Superstructure: 230,000 / 95,000 Highway: 90,000 Right-of-way: 5,000 Total: $560,000	A-2-4 / A-2-5 Demolition: $ 40,000 / $ 10,000 Substructure: 145,000 / 20,000 Superstructure: 220,000 / 95,000 Highway: 75,000 Right-of-way: 5,000 Total: $610,000
CONSTRUCTION TIME	6 to 8 months	6 to 8 months
DETOUR LENGTH & DURATION	Alternate state numbered route to Maynard is Route 62 in Concord. Alternate grade crossings in Acton are located at Martin Street, 0.4 mile west of Route 27, and Parker Street, 1 mile to the east.	
ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION	NEPA: Categorical Exclusion NEPA: Categorically Excluded.	

TO: The South Acton Revitalization Committee
FROM: Agnes Horigan Baker
RE: Economic Analysis

Introduction

The following tables and charts contain information on economic activity in Acton.* Population, housing and per-capita income all rose between 1970 and 1980 and continued growth is projected. Employment in Acton has also been strong with the Wholesale and Retail Trade, F.I.R.E. (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate), and Services sectors gaining the most jobs. Retail growth in both sales and employment during the past decade is largely due to the emergence of shopping centers.

MARKET CONSTRAINTS:

- Retail data indicates a trend toward larger shopping malls.
- Nearby competition is currently capturing most trade-area dollars.
- There is a lack of vacant, developable land in So. Acton
- Lack of sewer and wetland restrictions are constraints to new construction or redevelopment.
- So. Acton is not located at a major crossroads or in a central location in Acton.
- There is currently no existing major commercial draw to So. Acton.
- So. Acton is not a densely populated residential area and is unlikely to become one given sewer and wetlands restrictions and bordering conservation land.

MARKET ASSETS:

- The existence of many, older structures in So. Acton which qualify for rehabilitation tax incentives under the Economic Recovery Act of 1981 is a plus to development.
- Population, housing and income levels in Acton are growing.
- Acton and the surrounding area is experiencing exceptionally fast employment growth, especially in the Wholesale and Retail Trade, Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, and Services sectors.

MARKET RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seek historic district designation that will enable business to take full advantage of available tax incentives and that will enable South Acton to become more attractive to developers.
- With tax incentives and given the growth of the Services sector, office space could be developed in South Acton. Offices would stabilize the area and office employees and customers would provide additional market support for retailers, especially food and convenience oriented shops.

*Economic information is only compiled by community and is not available by sub-areas like South Acton. Community-wide trends are therefore used in this analysis.

- South Acton should expect only limited retail expansion given existing competition and development constraints. Possible areas of retail growth include:

  a. A small general store that carries food, health and beauty aids and other convenience goods. Such a store might be combined with a restaurant/coffee shop, particularly if office space is developed.

  b. A retailer which catered to the type of customer currently coming to South Acton for animal feed and grain (South Acton's largest commercial draw).

  c. A craft store that carries local goods and craft supplies might be successful if the Jones Tavern and the Faulkner House begin to attract more tourists.

ACTON AREA

TABLE 1 - POPULATION

TOWN	1970	1980	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
Acton	14,700	17,544	+ 2,844	+ 19.3
Concord	16,148	16,293	+ 145	+ .9
Maynard	9,710	9,590	- 120	- 1.2
Sudbury	13,506	14,027	+ 521	+ 3.9
Stow	3,984	5,144	+ 1,160	+ 29.1
TOTAL	58,048	62,598	+ 4,550	+ 7.8

Source: Bureau of the Census, PHC80-V-23, March 1981.

TABLE 2 - HOUSING UNITS

TOWN	1970	1980	# CHANGE	% CHANGE
Acton	4,195	6,309	+ 2,114	+ 50.4
Concord	4,444	5,342	+ 898	+ 20.2
Maynard	3,122	3,536	+ 414	+ 13.3
Sudbury	3,394	4,209	+ 815	+ 24.0
Stow	1,158	1,660	+ 502	+ 43.4
TOTAL	16,313	21,056	+ 4,743	+ 29.1

Source: Bureau of the Census, PHC80-V-23, March 1981.

TABLE 3 - POPULATION PROJECTIONS

TOWN	1980	1985	1990	1980-90 Gain/%
Acton	17,544	19,000	20,500	2,956/16.9
Concord	16,293	16,300	16,300	Constant
Maynard	9,590	9,600	9,600	Constant
Sudbury	14,027	14,000	14,000	Constant
Stow	5,144	6,000	6,900	1,756/34.1
TOTAL	62,598	64,900	67,300	+4,702/7.5

Source: INTERIM POPULATION FORECASTS 1980-2010. Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston, 1982.

TABLE 4 - PER-CAPITA INCOME TRENDS

TOWN	INCOME* 1969	1977	% CHANGE 1969-1977
Acton	$ 4,177	$ 7,661	83.4%
Concord	5,245	9,662	84.2
Maynard	3,231	5,866	81.6
Sudbury	4,339	8,022	84.9
Stow	3,705	7,254	95.8
AVERAGE	4,139	7,693	85.9

Source: Current Population Reports: Population Estimates and Projections, Series P-25, No.882, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, June 1980.

* Dollars not adjusted for inflation.

TABLE 5 - ACTON-AREA EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

TOWN	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT 1970	1980	CHANGE BETWEEN 1970-80 No.	%
Acton	2,046	4,606	+ 2,560	+ 125.1
Concord	4,183	8,095	+ 3,912	+ 93.5
Maynard	5,237	15,571	+ 10,334	+ 197.3
Sudbury	3,208	6,444	+ 3,236	+ 100.1
Stow	312	625	+ 312	+ 100.3
TOTAL	14,986	35,341	+ 20,355	+ 135.8

Source: Employment and Wages: Cities and Towns: 1967-1980, Massachusetts Division of Employment Security, Occupation/Industry Research Department, 1980.

TABLE 6 - ACTON EMPLOYMENT

SECTOR	EMPLOYMENT 1970	EMPLOYMENT 1980	CHANGE BETWEEN 1970-80 No.	CHANGE BETWEEN 1970-80 %
Agriculture	37	53	+ 16	+ 43.2
Construction	354	370	+ 16	+ 4.5
Manufacturing	773	1,051	+ 278	+ 36.0
Trans./Comm. Utilities	50	78	+ 28	+ 56.0
Wholesale & Retail Trade	426	1,719	+1293	+ 303.5
F.I.R.E.	22	132	+ 110	+ 500.0
Services	368	1,187	+ 819	+ 222.5
TOTAL*	2,030	4,590	+2560	+ 126.1

* Mining not included.

Source: Employment and Wages: Cities and Towns: 1967-1980, Massachusetts Division of Employment Security, Occupation/Industry Research Department, 1980.

TABLE 7.- RETAIL TRENDS IN ACTON

BUSINESS GROUP	1972-1977 CHANGE IN NUMBER	1972-77 CHANGE IN SALES ($1000)*	1972-77 % CHANGE IN SALES
Hardware	-3	+ 1,441	+ 22.0
General Merchandise	-2	NA	NA
Food and Liquor	+5	+ 5,136	+ 34.1
Automotive	+1	+ 3,297	+ 40.8
Gas	+2	+ 2,645	+ 106.6
Apparel and Accessories	+3	+ 3,527	+ 361.3
Furniture and Appliances	-0-	NA	NA
Eating and Drinking	+9	+ 3,111	+ 217.4
Drugs	+1	+ 853	+ 62.5
Miscellaneous Retail	+13	+ 7,833	+ 175.4
TOTAL	+29	+ 41,194	+ 80.3

*All dollars adjusted for inflation.
1."Miscellaneous Retail" includes retail establishments not elsewhere classified.

Source: US Census of Retail Trade, Bureau of the Census, Washington, D.C. (1972 and 1977).

TABLE 8 - SERVICE TRENDS IN ACTON*

Business Group	1972	1977	Change Between 1972-1977 No.	%
Hotels, Motels, Camps				
Number	2	2	-0-	-0-
Receipts($1000)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Automotive				
Number	10	14	+4	+40%
Receipts($1000)	$1,672	$ 985	-$687	-41%
Miscellaneous Repair				
Number	4	10	+6	+150%
Receipts($1000)	$ 109	NA	NA	NA
Amusement Recreation				
Number	11	27	+16	+145%
Receipts ($1000)	$ 747	$1,372	+625	+84%
Legal Services				
Number	5	14	+9	+180%
Receipts($1000)	NA	$ 940	NA	NA
TOTAL				
Number	116	183	+67	+58%
Receipts($1000)	$8,232	$10,268	$+2,036	+25%

* All dollars adjusted for inflation.

Source: Census of Service Industries, Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC (1972 and 1977).

TABLE 9: SELECTED RETAIL COMPETITION IN ACTON AREA

Facility	Location	Square Footage	Number Stores	Major Stores	Year Built
Acton Mall	Rte. 2A, Acton	100,000	25	Victory Supermarkets, Rx Health and Beauty Aids, The Hardware Place, Rusty Scupper	1977
K-MART	Rte. 27	N.A.	N.A.	K-MART	N.A.
Acton Shopping Center	Rte. 2 & Piper Rd., Acton	150,000	8	Giant Store, Stop & Shop	N.A.
Donelan's Shopping Center	Rte. 27, Acton	N.A.	N.A	Donelan's Supermarket, K-Mart	1967
Assabet Plaza	271 Great Rd., Acton	17,000	N.A.	Casual Male, Creative Camera, Pizza Hut, Clothes Corner	1977
First National Store	Acton	25,000	N.A.	First National Store	N.A.
West Acton	Acton	N.A.	17	Village Food, Acton Paint Hardware, Drug Store, Liquor Outlet, Dry Cleaners, A Cut Above	N.A.
Concord Center	Concord	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Concord Shopping Center	Sudbury Rd., Concord	25,000	1	Stop & Shop Supermarket	N.A.
Victory Plaza	Rte. 62, Maynard	20,000	1	Victory Plaza	1965
Maynard Center	Maynard	154,700	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Sudbury Plaza	Rte. 20, Sudbury	30,000	6	Aubuchon Hardware, Brooks Discount, First National Market	1963
Sudbury Shopping Center	Rte. 20, Sudbury	50,000	10	DuRobtrater Liquor, Anne Marie Cards & Gifts	N.A.
Wayside Plaza	Rte. 20, Sudbury	20,000	N.A.	Meat King, Beauty Parlor, Offices	N.A.
Mill Village Shopping Center	Rte. 20, Sudbury	43,500	27	Themel Speciality Shopping Center	1980
Stow Shopping Center	127 Great Rd., Stow	85,000	14	Purity Supreme, Stow Package Liquor, Radio Shack, Stow Drug.	1964

Source: 1981 Shopping Center Directory: The East, National Research Bureau, Inc., 1981.

DEFINITIONS

There are three general types of commercial districts which compete for a share of shopper's expenditures:

- Neighborhood Centers provide for the sale or goods needed on a daily basis - convenience items such as food, drugs and personal services. These centers are generally small, service only their immediate area and contain a supermarket or food store.

- Community Centers offer a much wider range of goods and services which include both convenience and comparison items. These centers are generally the site of a community central business district and have as their principal tenant a grocery or discount department store.

- Regional Centers provide an extensive variety of shopping goods including a broad selection of general merchandise, apparel and home furnishings, as well as services and convenience items. At least one or two major department stores are the principal tenants of these shopping centers, which typically draw customers from a large trade area that includes several communities.

Source: Definitions from Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, Urban Land Institute, Washington, D.C. (1981).

BUSINESSES TYPICALLY FOUND IN COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD SHOPPING CENTERS

Supermarket	NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS	COMMUNITY CENTERS
Beauty salon		
Barber shop		
Dry Cleaner		
Drug Store		
Restaurant		
Ladies Clothing		
Fast Food/Carry-out		
Laundramat		
Medical and Dental Offices		
Liquor Store		
Bank		
Radio, TV, hi-fi		
Real Estate Offices		
Cards & Gifts		
Super-drug store		
Hardware Store		
Variety Store		
Jewelry Store		
Furniture Store		
Ice Cream Parlor		
Arts and Crafts		
Books & Stationary Store		
Ladies Specialty Shop		
Savings and Loan		

Source: Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, Urban Land Institute, Washington, D.C. (1981)

May 3, 1982

Memorandum

TO: The "South Acton Vitalization Effort" Committee
FROM: Robbin Peach, Project Manager
SUBJ: Goals and Objectives for South Acton Revitalization

As previously discussed, traffic, parking and economic analysis of the area have shown that South Acton center could support limited mixed land-use development, slightly expanding its commercial and office potential. Analysis of the center's layout and design has shown a positive possibility to vastly improve the center's efficiency and image. To minimize limiting restrictions and take full advantage of potential for the center, the following goals and objectives have been recommended by MAPC staff. Your approval and/or alterations of them are needed. Please consider the goals and objectives carefully, as they will form the foundation for the recommended plan and future development in South Acton Center.

Marketing

GOAL: To encourage economic growth in the area by attracting limited commercial, office and residential development.

OBJECTIVE: Seek historic district designation to attract potential developers who could take advantage of available tax incentives for older structures.

OBJECTIVE: Educate building owners about existing tax incentives for rehabilitating buildings over 30 years old.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage financing incentives to attract developers. (i.e. Forming a local development corporation, a merchant's trust fund, etc.)

OBJECTIVE: Improve access to and from the center for both motorists and pedestrians. This will help attract business. (See Traffic and Parking)

OBJECTIVE: Improve the visual image of the village center to attract additional business.(See Urban Design).

Traffic and Parking

GOAL: To improve traffic circulation in South Acton Center by reducing congestion at the intersection and improving traffic sight lines.

OBJECTIVE: Redesign the intersection at Main and School Street to better define traffic circulation.

OBJECTIVE: Signalize the intersection to control traffic and allow safe pedestrian crossing.

OBJECTIVE: Redesign and regrade the bridge to improve sight lines.

GOAL: To meet existing parking needs and plan for adequate parking expansion for future development.

OBJECTIVE: Redesign existing private parking lots to be more efficient and visually attractive.

OBJECTIVE: Develop a public parking lot near the town center to help existing parking demand and provide for future expansion of the center.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage commercial or office developers to not only provide for their own parking needs but, where possible, to provide extra spaces for other near-by parcels lacking needed parking spaces.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage long-term employee parking away from buildings, leaving the more convenient closer spaces for customers.

Land Use

SHORT-TERM GOAL: To redistribute existing uses of land and buildings to maximize use of prime commercial/office space.

OBJECTIVE: Transfer civil defense to the old vacant railroad station, freeing the corner building for a productive, active use.

OBJECTIVE: Encourage bottom floor commercial development of the old post office building and large building between the old railroad station and civil defense building. (Top floor could remain residential.)

OBJECTIVE: Encourage commercial/office development on the bottom floor of the existing two residences, parcels #30 and #10, on Main Street. (Top floor remain residential.)

LONG-TERM GOAL: Given the recommended improvements and increased growth in South Acton, the center could possibly support additional commercial/office development.

OBJECTIVE: Develop the parcel at the corner of Maple and Main Street. (Possible office building.)

OBJECTIVE: Encourage development of the Jones Tavern. (Parcels behind the tavern would have to provide septic and parking.)

OBJECTIVE: Develop other parcels along Main Street as potential commercial/office space.

Urban Design

GOAL: To improve pedestrian circulation in the center.

OBJECTIVE: Provide safe, convenient, attractive sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the center.

OBJECTIVE: Provide convenient attractive pedestrian access to parking lots.

OBJECTIVE: Provide pedestrian amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and benches.

OBJECTIVE: Provide landscaping for shade, comfort and visual interest.

GOAL: To improve the visual image of South Acton Center, enhancing its "sense of place".

OBJECTIVE: Accentuate the small town historic character of the village center by using appropriate paving materials, storefront design, signs and amenities.

OBJECTIVE: Provide dynamic landscaping to make travelling through the center a pleasant memorable experience. (i.e. Plant beautiful spring flowering trees along the main streets to provide a floral theme.)

OBJECTIVE: Emphasize the intersection of the center as a village focal point. (i.e. Use special landscaping treatment; encourage well-designed storefronts and signs on the corner buildings, etc.)

OBJECTIVE: Keep the center well-maintained.

June 1, 1982

TO: South Acton Vitalization Effort Committee

FROM: Robbin Peach and Mark Siegenthaler

SUBJ: Summary of Recommendations

South Acton Center, located at a busy intersection has traffic, parking and image problems aggravated by poorly designed roads, inefficient or non-existent parking lots and buildings that are vacant, ill-maintained or poorly designed. The small village character, historic buildings, available open-space and community involvement, however, offer great potential to improve the efficiency and image of the business district. MAPC's analysis of the center has resulted in the following recommendations meant to encourage economic growth, improve traffic and pedestrian circulation, provide efficient land-uses and enhance the visual specialness of South Acton Center.

Marketing

- Improve the appearance and convenience of the town center to stimulate customer and developer interest.
- Promote the use of available tax incentives for rehabilitating old structures (Educate existing building owners.) Also seek historic district designation for other benefits.
- Encourage limited expansion of commercial/office and residential space in the center.
- Urge design control of any future development in the center, especially large tracts of land.

Land Use

- Encourage commercial or office development on bottom floors of buildings surrounding the intersection.
- Convert the vacant railroad station into municipal use - Civil Defense and social activities.
- Maintain a long-term goal to develop Jones Tavern, to build at the corner of Maple and Main and to stimulate commercial use of buildings on Main Street.

Traffic

- Redesign the intersection at Main and School Street to better define traffic circulation.
- Signalize the intersection to control traffic and allow safe pedestrian crossing.
- Reconstruct the bridge to improve sight lines.

Parking

- Redesign existing private lots to improve efficiency and appearance.
- Develop a public lot near the center to furnish existing parking needs while providing for future expansion of the center.
- Encourage long-term parkers, such as employees to use the less convenient spaces, leaving closer spots for customers.
- Insist that new development provide attractive adequate parking.

Urban Design

- Provide safe, convenient, attractive sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the center.
- Provide attractive pedestrian access to parking lots through existing alleys or side streets.
- Landscape sidewalks and alleys with benches, trash receptacles and lights that are appropriate to the historic character of the center.
- Emphasize Main Street and the intersection by using beautiful flowering trees. Use shade trees elsewhere.
- Remove front-yard parking from Main Street businesses, providing landscaping.
- Maintain South Acton Center.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS

TRAFFIC

The traffic analysis memorandum suggested the necessity for design changes, especially re-design and signalization of the School Street/Main Street intersection, and reconstruction of the existing bridges. Designs for the intersection have been developed, but before they can be considered, the issue of overall roadway layout must be addressed.

Roadway Layout

Proposals have been made to include relocation of a section of Main Street - between High Street and the Exchange Hall - in the bridge reconstruction plans. The proposal seeks several improvements, among them improved sight lines at High Street, improved bridge conditions, and restoration of the roadway to its original path.

Although specific designs have not been developed, the prospect of a relocated Main Street does suggest drastic changes in existing conditions. Any relocation plan following the original roadway layout would require the removal of the Acton Civil Defense building, several major trees, and possibly the residence north of the Exchange Hall. It would also create a more complex Main Street/School Street/Railroad Street intersection and force either major regrading of School Street or a lowering of the railroad tracks and bridge.

Due to the severity of these changes, MAPC recommends that the existing roadway layout be maintained with improvements made to the existing bridges and intersections.

Intersection Design

The problems present at the School Street/Main Street intersection include a lack of definition, poor access onto Main Street at peak volumes and poor pedestrian access.

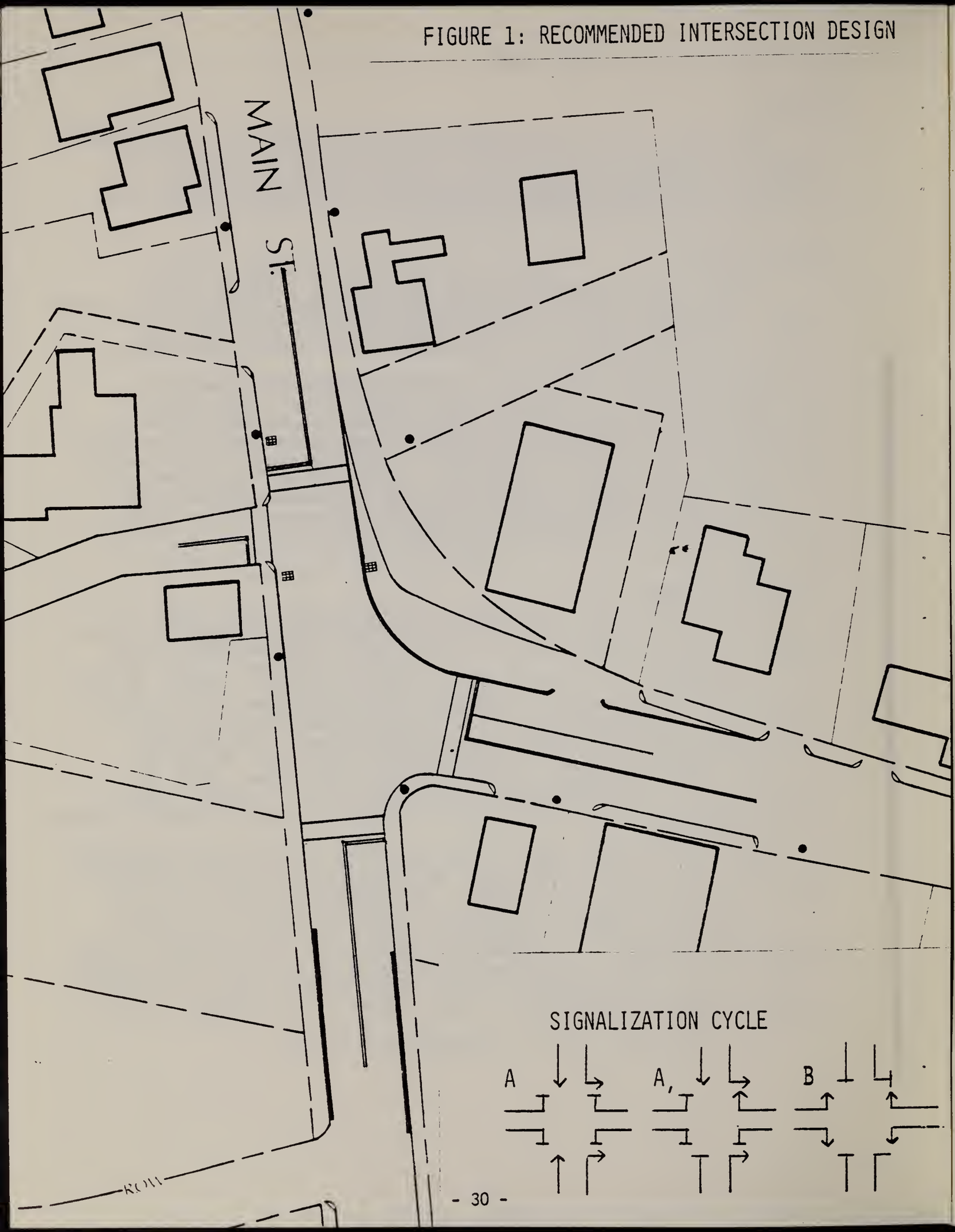
The recommended intersection design pictured in Figure 1 provides improved conditions for each approach. On School Street, the road has been reduced to a consistent 41' width providing a single lane from Main Street onto School Street and two lanes from School Street onto Main Street. This approach provides a separate left turn lane and a straight/right lane. The 80' left turn lane will be controlled by a separate signal, and be long enough to accomodate the line of cars expected to be turning left. The right lane will be prohibited from turning right on red. On-street parking will also be prohibited on School Street.

Main Street south of School Street, and Railroad Street will be unchanged except for the addition of stop lines. Main Street north of School Street has been reduced to a consistent 35' width. The southbound approach is 20' wide allowing for greater capacity entering the intersection from this direction.

Alternative designs using islands to separate approach lanes on School Street were considered but rejected. This technique of "channelization" seemed inappropriate in this setting. From a practical point of view, it provides less usable space than the recommended design, and maintainence such as snow removal is more difficult. Aesthetically, traffic islands would not enhance the small town nature of the area.

The signalization cycle is also presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: RECOMMENDED INTERSECTION DESIGN



Several general recommendations for improvements at the High Street/ Main Street intersection should be considered to improve safety conditions. Relocation of the residence at the corner of Main Street; redesign of the intersection providing consistent roadway width, a guardrail and/or warning signs; and consolidation of the driveways at the grain mill would all improve conditions. Improvements such as the signs and guardrail could be used before major actions like redesign or building relocation are attempted.

Bridge Reconstruction

As stated in the traffic analysis memorandum, MAPC recommends that the committee pursue bridge reconstruction plans currently being reviewed by the MDPW. These plans allow for reconstruction and regrading without adverse affects on South Acton Center.

PARKING

The conceptual plan recommends the creation of additional parking at several sites throughout South Acton. Individual designs have not been developed but as demand increases, parking lots on School Street, off Railroad Street and behind several stores on Main Street, will require more detailed work.

Specific designs for the location in South Acton most in need of additional parking - the Exchange Hall - have been developed. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate two possible parking layouts. The intersection improvements will require that access to parking at the Exchange Hall must be from School Street. A separate, residential driveway must also be created to serve the residences north of the Exchange Hall. Figure 2 proposes 12 spaces with a one-way circulation system. The 12 spaces would provide the same amount of parking that is now avialable on-site.

Figure 3 proposes an expansion of the parking area to provide 18 spaces. This layout also includes a one-way circulation system from School Street and would require additional land from surrounding parcels.

Currently the parking on-site does not provide enough spaces to meet demand or town parking codes. MAPC recommends that the parking area be expanded so as to meet town code (approximately 18 spaces) and provide more on-site spaces. MAPC also recommends that employees of the Exchange Hall be encouraged to park off site.

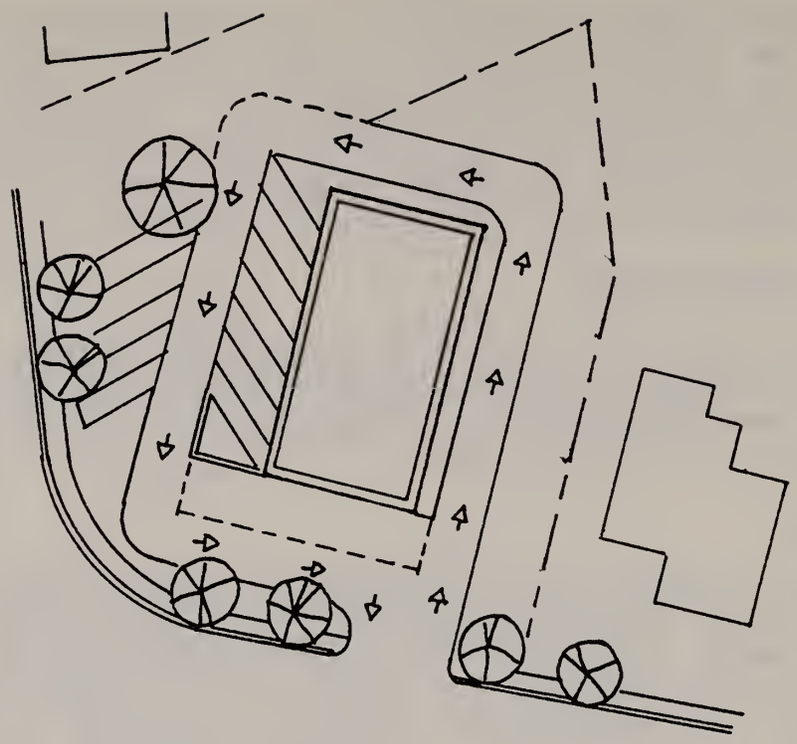
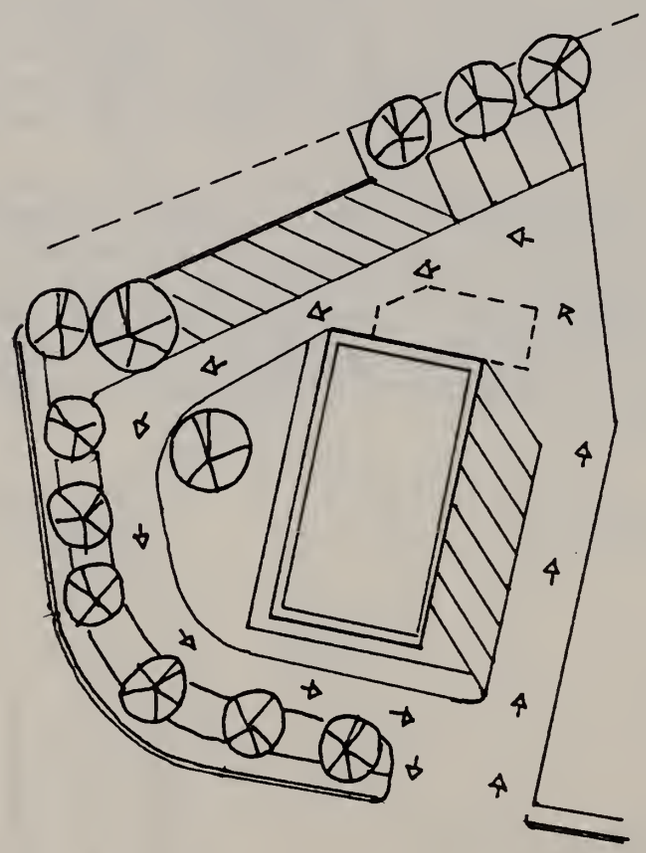


FIGURE 2

FIGURE 3



SIGNS

Signs are an important element contributing to the character of a business district, significantly enhancing or detracting from the area's appearance. Signs advertise individual businesses, and in concentrations, create a general image advertising the entire Center as a shopping district. To effectively communicate their message about individual businesses and their affiliation with the business community, signs throughout the area must be brief, legible, and consistent.

Complementary signs coordinated throughout the business district can function as a unifying theme in the streetscape and can work together to make a stronger impression on the viewer than a jumble of unrelated signs. In order to achieve this unified character, the existing character of the architecture and streetscape should be considered when selecting sizes, colors, and materials. This does not mean that all signs must look exactly alike. In fact, a variety of signs can be an asset to the center, adding interest and color to the shopping environment, while still adhering to a similar theme.

Signs should be as simple and direct as possible. If too much information is presented on a storefront sign, signs along the street compete for attention, the individual message becomes lost in the visual clutter, and the viewer gets a poor overall impression. To prevent this, the number of words on a sign should be just enough to communicate the essential message. Wording should be limited to the name of the business and in some cases to the service provided. One of the simplest and most effective techniques is the use of symbols rather than words to represent products or services. At a quick glance, the potential customer can see what service is being offered.

The same rule of simplicity should also be considered when selecting colors and materials. Too many variations in color and materials is distracting and unattractive. The degree of contrast between the copy and background is the most important factor. Light colored lettering on a dark backing, or visa versa, is the most legible. Varying hues and intensities of the same color can be used.

The color scheme should be kept simple, for too many colors work against one another. It is important to find out the effects of the colors you choose (i.e. bright colors illicit excitement, quiet colors suggest dignity or repose). The chosen color should be compatible with the general building color and color of neighboring signs.

Signs should complement the building facade and should not be so large that they obscure the architectural details of the building.

IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

The following is a chart summarizing funding assistance available from Federal, State and local sponsors, as of 1982. Detailed explanations of the funds follow.

TITLE	NO.	SPONSOR	TYPE OF FUNDING/ ASSISTANCE	APPLICABLE TO:
Community Development Block Grant	1	State	Grants to Communities	ED, T, D, O
Massachusetts Government Land Bank	2	State	Redevelopment Program	ED
Commercial Area Revitalization District Plan	3	State	Eligibility Program	ED, T, D, O
Negotiated Tax Agreements: Chapter 121-A	4	Local/State	Tax Agreement	ED
Leeway Law	5	State	Investment Incentive for Bank	
State Urban Renewal: Chapter 121-B	6	State	Redevelopment Program	ED
Community Development Action Grant Program	7	State	Grants to Communities	ED
Urban Development Action Grants	8	Federal	Grants to Communities	ED, T, D, O
Small Business Administration: Section 7A	9	Federal/Local	Loans to Business	ED, D
Revolving Loan Funds	10	Local	Loans to Businesses	ED, D
Economic Development Administration	11	Federal	Grants Loans to Businesses and Communities	ED, T, D, O
Framers Home Administration	12	Federal	Grants and Loans to Businesses and Communities	ED, T, D, O
Massachusetts Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation	13	State	Technical Assistance to Communities	ED
Massachusetts Small Business Development Center	14	State	Technical Assistance to Businesses	ED
Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency	15	State	Industrial Revenue Bonds and Loan Guarantees	ED
Urban Job Incentive	16	State	Tax Incentive for Business	ED
Industrial Revenue Bonds	17	State	Industrial Revenue Bonds	ED
Massachusetts Foundation	18	Private	Development Funds for Business	ED
Massachusetts Business Development Corp.	19	State	Loans to Business	ED
Massachusetts Community Development Finance Corporation	20	State	Loans and/or Equity to Business	ED
Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981	21	Federal	Tax Incentive for Rehabilitation	ED, D
Historic Preservation Incentives	22	Federal/State	Grants and Tax Incentives for Preservation	D
Local Historic District	23	Local/State	Eligibility Program	D
Urban Systems Roadway Improvements	24	Federal/State	Grants to Communities	T, D
Off-Street Parking Program	25	State	Grants to Communities	T
Public Works Economic Development Program	26	State	Grants to Communities	T, O
State Aid Distribution to Municipalities	27	State/Local	Funds to Communities	T, D
Self-Help Conservation Grant Program	28	State	Grants to Communities	D
Repair and Rehabilitation of Water Systems: Chapter 805	29	State	Grants to Communities	O
Sewer Collection System Grants: Chapter 557	30	State	Grants to Communities	O
Sewage Treatment Construction Grants: Section 201	31	Federal/State	Grants to communities	O

ED = Economic Development

T = Transportation, including traffic and parking

D = Design, including historic preservation

O = Other Public Works

1. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS - SMALL CITIES
State/EOCD

The Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) for small cities, formerly administered by the federal department of Housing and Urban Development, is now the responsibility of the state Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD). Eligible activities include property acquisition, improvement and disposition; rehabilitation loans, grants or interest writedowns; public infrastructure improvements to leverage private investment; business-development assistance; acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of commercial or industrial facilities; and grant management and administration.

All Massachusetts communities under 50,000 population (except "entitlement" communities) are eligible to apply for one year or two year grants. Grants will range from a minimum of $100,000 to a maximum of $700,000 per year.

For further information contact:

The Division of Community Services
EOCD
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-7180

2. MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNMENT LAND BANK
State/Land Bank

The Government Land Bank is an independent state agency originally created to assist cities and towns in the conversion of closed military bases to civilian use. Legislation in 1980 granted the agency the authority to participate in a broader range of redevelopment projects including the revitalization of industrial, commercial and residential properties.

The criteria for Government Land Bank involvement include financial feasibility, public benefits, community support, and the leverage of private investment. The agency is currently empowered to take possession of, clear, improve and dispose of surplus federal and state property and blighted open property. The Land Bank does not provide low interest loans per se, but rather acquires, improves and sells property at favorable terms. The agency can also help cities and towns with the technical analyses needed to determine the feasibility of a proposal.

The Land Bank works jointly with project sponsors to determine the eligibility of individual projects. The agency considers applications for both small and large industrial, commercial, residential and mixed-use developments.

For further information contact:

Mr. David Knisely
Director of Projects
Government Land Bank
6 Beacon Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-8257

3. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION DISTRICT (CARD) PLANS
Local-State/EOCD

Commercial firms in approved revitalization districts are eligible for tax-exempt revenue bond financing, mortgage insurance, and state tax-credits in high-property-tax communities. In addition, communities with approved districts are eligible to apply for funds under the state's Off-Street Parking Program and Chapter 557 Economic Benefit Sewer program.

To be eligible for these programs, the commercial activity must be located in an approved Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD), typically an older downtown area. CARD plans are developed by the community and submitted to the Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD) for review and approval. To qualify, the area must be an older, established commercial area experiencing (or threatened by) physical decay. EOCD has published guidelines on how to prepare a CARD plan, and has staff available to assist cities and towns in the process.

All communities in Massachusetts are eligible to develop CARD plans. To qualify, the district must be an older, established commercial area.

For further information contact:

Mr. Ed Mangini, Administrator
Executive Office of Communities and Development
Room 904
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-7180

4. NEGOTIATED TAX AGREEMENTS: CHAPTER 121-A
Local-State/EOCD

This Massachusetts General Law enables communities to attract private development to blighted, substandard, or decaying areas through the negotiation of a tax agreement for a term of up to 40 years. The community, in deciding to negotiate this type of agreement, must determine if the development will make a long-term contribution to the community deserving a tax agreement.

The procedure for negotiating this agreement requires the Executive Office of Communities and Development (except in Boston) to approve the application for the proposed development. The procedures for the application and approval process are spelled out in a publication, entitled Chapter 121-A: A Handbook for Local Officials.

Usually a single purpose corporation is formed to utilize Chapter 121-A. Partnerships, joint-venture corporations, non-profit corporations, insurance companies, saving cooperatives and bank consortiums are eligible to apply for this agreement.

For further information contact:

Ms. Arlene Browne
Executive Office of Communities and Development
Room 903
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-7180

5. LEEWAY LAW
State/Banking Department

The so-called "Leeway-Law" was enacted by the Massachusetts Legislature in 1970 to enable both savings banks and cooperative banks to directly invest in development projects (or business ventures) they would not otherwise be authorized to invest in. Banks seeking ways to display their commitment to the communities they serve can take the initiative in community revitalization efforts by participating directly in development plans. The Leeway Law provides a great deal of freedom to banks to play a number of roles in the development process. Banks can provide the equity as well as the financing needed to get a project moving.

Working usually through a solely owned subsidiary, a bank can purchase, develop, and manage property. The size of a bank's leeway investments are limited to a maximum percent of total deposits on any single investment.

For further information contact:

Mr. Edward F. Flynn, Jr.
Deputy Commissioner of the Banking Department
20th Floor
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3139

6. STATE URBAN RENEWAL: CHAPTER 121-B
State/EOCD

The Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD) is responsible for approving all renewal plans, as submitted by local redevelopment authorities. These plans are primarily used to package development proposals, especially when private land is being acquired for transfer to a private entity for some public purpose. In the past, some funding has been provided for planning assistance grants for economic development. A local Redevelopment Authority or Housing Authority is the entity which submits these plans.

For further information contact:

Mr. John Young
Division of Community Services
Executive Office of Communities and Development
Room 903
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-3197

7. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTION GRANT (CDAG) PROGRAM
State/EOCD

The Massachusetts Community Development Action Grant program was signed into law in 1982. (Final rules and regulations are still being reviewed by the Legislature.) The purpose of the program is to provide financial support for projects aimed at attracting and leveraging private investment, creating new employment opportunities, and revitalizing distressed areas.

The program will be administered by the Executive Office of Communities and Development (EOCD) and will be open to all cities and towns throughout the state. Program requirements include that the project area be blighted, that the project will be of public benefit and would not occur by private enterprise alone, and that the project will have significant impact on the economic condition.

For further information contact:

Mr. John Loehr
EOCD
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-7130

8. URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACTION GRANTS
Federal/HUD

This program encourages private investment and development in distressed urban areas, through the leveraging of private funds with federal funds. The federal funds can be used to provide direct loan assistance to the developer or they can be used to finance public construction to facilitate private efforts.

The program is limited to communities that meet HUD's "distress" criteria. Activities eligible for funding can be virtually any component of a development program that is tied to a private commitment. Typically, HUD looks for projects which "leverage" private commitments equal to at least five or six times the public investment.

The determination of eligibility is made by HUD based on a set of "distress" criteria that measure such factors as age of housing, unemployment, and population decline.

For further information contact:

Mr. Robert L. Paquin, Director
Community Planning and Development Division
Boston Area Office
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
15 New Chardon Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 223-4114

9. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA): SECTION 7A
Federal-Local/SBA

Loan Guarantees and Loan Programs.
The SBA aids small businesses that are unable to obtain conventional financing. Direct loans and loan guarantees may be used for business construction, expansion, or conversion of facilities and to purchase building materials or equipment.

Direct loans, which are currently being discouraged by the SBA, are available at below the prime rate. The maximum loan amount is $150,000.

Guaranteed loans are insured for up to 90 percent, for loan amounts of up to $500,000. Guarantees allow businesses to negotiate for a lower than usual rate with local banks.

For further information contact:

Your local bank or
Doris McCarthy
SBA
150 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 223-3224

10. REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS
Local

Any bank that regularly provides credit is operating a revolving loan fund. All "revolving" means is that when loans are repaid, the money returns to a pool of available funds to be lent out to someone else. The basic reason for a revolving loan fund is to reduce the bank's risk enough to persuade bank loan administrators to participate in the financing they may not make ordinarily.

Loan funds set up by organizations for this purpose come in two forms: direct and guarantee. With a direct loan fund, the organization extends a portion of the total loan needed by the business. Normally the group takes a subordinated position to the bank, which means that in case of default the bank has priority in recovering its losses from sale of the firm's assets.

Loan guarantee programs work somewhat differently. Instead of actually making part of the loan, the guarantor agrees to insure the bank against some percentage of losses. Organizations that operate guarantee funds usually deposit the amount they are insuring at the bank during the term of the loan. This "compensating balance" insures to the bank that the monies are indeed available to guarantee its loan. It also provides a bonus for the bank: additional funds it can loan to other customers during the life of the revolving loan guarantee.

For further information contact:

The Massachusetts Community Economic Development
Assistance Corporation
27 School Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-0506

11. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION
Federal/EDA

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) has a variety of programs aimed at encouraging economic development including public works programs, business loans, and economic planning grants. The new EDA program regulations and funding levels are pending and seem likely to change. Four of the major existing programs are described below:

Title I Public Works and Development Facilities: States, municipalities, special authorities, and public or private non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for grants for the acquisition, development, or expansion of public works facilities. Included are: water and sewer systems, site improvements for industrial parks, factories and port facilities. These funds cannot be used for the acquisition of land. In order to apply for grants, an area must have an approved Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) on file with EDA.

Title II Business Development Loans: Any public or private entity including non-profit and for-profit corporations, sole proprietorships and partnerships are eligible to apply for direct loans, to be used for the acquisition of fixed assets (land, building, equipment, machinery); land preparation; building rehabilitation; and working capital for industrial or commercial enterprises. Interest rates are based on the current U.S. Treasury borrowing rates.

All loans must be consistent with the area's Overall Economic Development Program and be approved by a state or local economic development agency.

Title III Economic Development Planning Grants: Government entities and organizations engaged in planning economic development activities can apply for direct grants to fund planning, staffing and administrative expenses related to economic development planning projects. A 25 percent non-federal match is required. Grants are for one year and are ordinarily renewed.

Supplemental and Basic Grants Program (Section 304): The 304 program provides states (which must provide a 25 percent match) with monies to initiate and enhance eligible economic development projects. The type of eligible projects include: grants for public works and development facilities; business and industrial loans and loan guarantees; grants for technical assistance, research, and economic development planning; and grants for special economic development and adjustment assistance. Projects must conform to the state's economic development goals and policies.

For further information contact:

Mr. William Fitzhenry
Economic Development Administration
441 Stuart Street
Boston, MA 02116
(617) 223-6468

12. FARMERS HOME ADMINISTRATION
Federal/FmHA

The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) administers several programs directed toward economic development in "rural" areas. Many of Massachusetts' older centers (particularly in Western Massachusetts) qualify as "rural."

Business and Industrial Loans: Public, private or cooperative organizations, or individuals in rural areas are eligible to apply for guaranteed loans (up to 90 percent of principal and interest). Loans may be used for: business and industrial acquisitions; construction; repair; modernization; purchase of land; machinery and equipment; furniture and fixtures; start-up and working capital; processing and marketing facilities; and pollution control. Interest rates, consistent with market rates, are determined between the borrower and a private lender. Loans are repayable over 30 years on land, buildings and permanent fixtures; 15 years on machinery and equipment; seven years on working capital. A 10 percent to 30 percent equity investment may be required. Generally the minimum loan size is $500,000.

Community Facility Loans: Public agencies, as well as non-profit corporations, are eligible to apply for loans to construct or improve community facilities which provide essential services to rural residents. Towns and special purpose districts of 10,000 population or less are eligible. Facilities which provide residents with safety and protection (such as fire stations and hospitals) are given first priority. Large loans are discouraged. The interest rate on these loans fluctuates every quarter and is based on the prime rate.

Water and Waste Disposal Loans and Grants: Municipalities, counties, special purpose districts, and non-profit corporations are eligible for funds to improve water and waste disposal facilities. Preference is given to areas with less than 5,500 people. The interest rate on these loans fluctuate and is based on the prime rate.

For further information contact:

Farmers Home Administration
Massachusetts State Office
451 West Street
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 253-3471

13. MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION
State/CEDAC

CEDAC is a quasi-public agency that promotes the participation of community-based non-profit organizations, such as community development corporations, in the process of developing economically depressed neighborhoods and communities. CEDAC is able to provide technical assistance that involves a broad range of expertise including:

1. organizational development
2. financial planning and packaging
3. market research
4. management training
5. legal advice
6. grantsmanship advice

For further information on CEDAC, contact:

Massachusetts Community Economic
Development Assistance Corporation
27 School Street, Suite 500
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617) 727-0506

14. MASSACHUSETTS SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER
State/MSBDC

The MSBDC is a program funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration and the Massachusetts Department of Commerce and Development to provide comprehensive small business management and technical assistance to the small business community. The MSBDC provides business counseling, marketing research, business planning and financial analysis through professional counselors who have access to the resources of participating universities and colleges as well as the expertise of specialized consultants. The MSBDC also provides long-term courses and one-day workshops on subject areas of interest to the small business person or prospective small business owners.

The MSBDC is coordinated from a central unit at the University of Massachusetts Center for Economic Development in Amherst. Presently there are two regional service centers. The Western Massachusetts SBDC is located in Springfiled and services small businesses in Berkshire, Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin counties. The Metro Boston SBCD is situated in Chestnut Hill, adjacent to the Boston College Campus. In addition, three new centers are in the planning stages for central, northeastern and southeastern Massachusetts.

For further information and assistance, contact:

Small Business Development Center
School of Business Administration
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003
(413) 549-4930, Extension 303

15. MASSACHUSETTS INDUSTRIAL FINANCE AGENCY
State/MIFA

The Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency (MIFA) is an independent state agency designed to promote employment growth through incentives that stimulate business investment in Massachusetts. MIFA's incentives for industrial companies include industrial revenue bonds, loan guarantees, and pollution control bonds.

MIFA financing is available for commercial real estate if these projects are located in locally designated Commercial Area Revitalization Districts (CARD). CARD areas primarily encompass older downtown areas.

For further information on MIFA, contact:

Robert E. Patterson, Executive Director
Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency
125 Pearl Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02109
(617) 451-2477

16. URBAN JOB INCENTIVE
State/EOEA

The Urban Job Incentive is a dual tax incentive designed to induce corporations to establish new places of business in primarily urban municipalities. This locational incentive program effectively reduces the equalized local property tax rate to the state's equalized average as it applies to an eligible corporation, while also providing for a 25% payroll deduction.

The Urban Job Incentive works in two ways:

1. A company may claim a credit against its state excise tax liability. The amount of the credit equals the difference between a city's tax rate and the state's average times the assessed value of the property per thousand. In some cities, this credit over a 10-year period could equal or exceed the cost of property itself.

2. Companies locating in an eligible area can also deduct from their revenues 25% more than actually paid in compensation to those employees who live in an "eligible section of substantial poverty." This 25% is in addition to the 100% normally allowable for a deduction. Attached are lists of eligible cities and towns. (Please note that the list of eligible areas will change once the income statistics from the 1980 census are made available.)

Industrial enterprises locating in an eligible area and commercial enterprises locating in commercial area revitalization districts (C.A.R.D.) within an eligible area all alike for the Urban Job Incentive. The facility may be either a new place of business or a substantial addition to an existing place of business, but not a replacement facility. The facility must employ at least 20% of its employees from the "eligible section of substantial poverty" in which it is located. In addition, the participating corporation must offer a training program which provides for job upgrading and entry into supervisory positions.

For further information, contact:

Urban Job Incentive Bureau
Executive Office of Economic Affairs
One Ashburton Place, Room 2101
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617) 727-8380

17. INDUSTRIAL REVENUE BONDS
State/Local

An industrial revenue bond is a low interest, tax-exempt bond issued through a state agency or a municipality on behalf of private enterprises. It is used to finance industrial expansion projects such as plant and equipment loans. What the bond effectively does is lower the rate of interest on a capital expenditure loan to about three-fourths of the prime lending rate (this varies from case to case). The credit of this bond is that of the company, and not of the issuing authority, the state, or the municipality.

Revenue bonds are available for commercial enterprises but only in designated Commercial Area Revitalization Districts (CARDs). A CARD is set up by a communtiy (with the approval of the state) in order to bring about the revitalization of central business districts, usually encompassing downtown areas.

The bonds are issued either by the local Industrial Development Financing Authority (IDFA) in a particular municipality with MIFA's approval, or, in communities without IDFA's, by MIFA itself.

For further information on revenue bonds contact:

Massachusetts Industrial Finance Agency
125 Pearl Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
(617) 451-2477

18. MASSACHUSETTS FOUNDATION
Private

The purpose of the Massachusetts Foundation is to provide permanent mortgage money to developers and industrial concerns building new facilities within Massachusetts. The Foundation is an organization of pension funds used for financing new union construction in Massachusetts. Only real estate projects over $1 million are eligible for funding.

For further information, contact:

Richard Kronish
Professor of Labor Studies
University of Massachusetts
Boston, Massachusetts 02127
(617) 287-1900 X 2800

19. MASSACHUSETTS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
State/MBDC

The Massachusetts Business Development Corporation (MBDC) provides loans for businesses who cannot obtain all of their financial requirements from conventional sources. Many small or medium-sized business enterprises are eligible for financing.

MBDC makes six types of loans:

1. Working capital-secured by fixed assets.
2. Leveraged buy-outs when a significant loss of jobs from the Commonwealth is at stake.
3. Second mortgages-conventional or with an industrial revenue bond for plant expansion or new production facilities.
4. Government guaranteed loans-various programs: SBA, Farmers Home Administration.
5. SBA 503 loans.
6. Long-term loans for new equipment or energy conversion.

While MBDC often participates with conventional lenders in a financial package plan, it can provide up to 100% financing. Loans are medium to long-term. The advantages to businesses of borrowing from MBDC include:

1. MBDC accepts collateral which normally is not acceptable to conventional lenders;
2. MBDC provides guidance and expertise for businesses seeking financing.

For further information on MBDC, contact:

Massachusetts Business Development Corporation
One Boston Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02108
(617) 723-7515

20. MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION
State/CDFC

CDFC provides capital to entrepreneurs unable to secure financing through conventional funding sources. CDFC's investments must be made in conjunction with community development corporations (CDC's). (CDC's exist in many economically depressed neighborhoods throughout Massachusetts.) Emphasis is on developing sound businesses which will create or retain good-paying jobs and provide other economic benefits to residents in communities served by CDC's.

Investments are made by CDFC from a $10 million fund provided by the Commonwealth. These investments may take the form of loans and/or equity. The rates and terms of each investment are negotiable.

Entrepreneurs wishing to apply should contact CDFC to see if a CDC exists or is being created in their area and whether that area is eligible under CDFC guidelines. A full business plan can then be prepared.

It is important that entrepreneurs have explored conventional sources of financing prior to approaching CDFC with a business proposal.

For further information on CDFC, contact:

Massachusetts Community Development
Finance Croporation (CDFC)
131 State Street
Suite 600
Boston, Massachusetts 02109
(617) 742-0366

21. ECONOMIC RECOVERY TAX ACT OF 1981
Federal

An Investment Tax Credit (ITC) is a credit that may be deducted from the amount of the taxes owed. Under the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (ERTA), and ITC for qualified rehabilitation is as follows: 15 percent for non-residential structures at least 30 years old; 20 percent for non-residential structures at least 40 years old; and 25 percent for certified historic structures, residential or non-residential.

A "qualified rehabilitation" refers to any building that has been substantially rehabilitated, that is, rehabilitation expenditures exceeding the greater of either the taxpayer's adjusted basis in the property or $5,000 within a 24-month period. The building also must have been in use prior to beginning the rehabilitation and retain at least 75 percent of the existing external walls.

For further information contact:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation
45 School Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 223-7754

22. HISTORIC PRESERVATION INCENTIVES
Federal-State/MHC

There are two major federal programs aimed at encouraging the preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings; both are administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

National Register Grant-in-Aid Program: The Federal Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service provides funds for matching grants of up to 50% of costs to property owners who buy and/or develop properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Funds can also be used for survey and planning projects related to historic resources.

Tax Act Certifications: Owners of income-producing National Register properties (including rental housing units) can receive tax incentives for rehabilitation work - either amortizing their costs over a five-year period, taking accelerated depreciation over five years, or receiving an investment tax credit of 25 percent, 15 percent or 10 percent depending on the age and historic/architectural significance of the structure.

The MHC reviews and approves all proposed rehabilitation work before the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service receives the plans for final approval and certification for tax purposes. Owners and buyers of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are eligible to apply.

For further information contact:

Ms. Candace Jenkins
(National Register Grant-in-Aid
Mr. Joseph Orfant
(Tax Act Certifications)
Massachusetts Historical Commission
294 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-8470

23. LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
Local/Massachusetts Local Historic District Association

The purpose of an historic district is to give historical or architectural significance, and to encourage new designs that are compatible with the existing buildings. A local historic-district commission reviews proposed exterior changes to buildings or applications for new construction and rules on the appropriateness of the proposal. There are no provisions in local historic districts for financial support for rehabilitation, nor is there necessarily any protection from adverse effects of federal programs, but if the local district is certified by the Secretary of the Interior as meeting National

Register criteria, the local district may be eligible for tax benefits.

For further information contact:

Dave Nazaroff
Massachusetts Local Historic District Association
265 Hale Street
Beverly, MA 01915
(617) 922-4562

24. URBAN SYSTEMS ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS
Federal-State/DOT-DPW

Funding under the Urban Systems program can be used for improvements to existing roadway systems. Eligible activities include reconstruction, removal of on-street parking, realignment, sidewalk improvements, street lighting, and tree planting along improved roadways. Monies can also be used to pay for the replacement of spaces lost through the removal of on-street parking in an Urban Systems project or through some other federally funded street improvement program.

Seventy percent of the cost of these projects is paid by the federal government and the remaining 30 percent by the state. In order for a community to move its project along expeditiously, it must use local funds to produce designs which can be approved at the state level for construction financing. Most municipalities are eligible to apply.

For further information contact:

Mr. Sumner Hoffman
Urban Systems Coordinator
100 Nashua Street
Room 804
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 727-9400

25. OFF-STREET PARKING PROGRAM
State/Administration and Finance

The Executive Office of Administration and Finance administers the Off-Street Parking Program. This program is designed to assist cities and towns in financing the construction of public off-street parking facilities in Commercial Area Revitalization Districts (CARDs). It provides grants on a 70 percent state/30 percent local matching fund basis.

Communities with a population of over 20,000 or those with commercial facilities for a regional market area are eligible to apply for funds for an approved CARD district.

For further information contact:

Mr. Paul Mahoney
General Counsel
Executive Office of Administration and Finance
Room 271M
State House
Boston, MA 02133
(617) 727-2070

26. PUBLIC WORKS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
State/EOTC

Under this program, the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC) is responsible for funding the design and construction of roads and other related public works facilities needed to stimulate local economic development. Eligible activities include projects for the design, construction and/or reconstruction of public access roads, bridges, curbing, sidewalks, lighting systems, traffic control facilities, and drainage systems associated with municipal economic development. Grants are provided for 100 percent of project cost. All Massachusetts communities are eligible to apply.

For further information contact:

Mr. Patrick Moynihan or Steven Edelstein
Executive Office of Transportation and Construction
1 Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-7680 or 727-2373

27. STATE AID DISTRIBUTION TO MUNICIPALITIES
State-local/MDPW

State aid to municipalities for highway purposes is provided by the Massachusetts motor fuel tax. The tax is 10 percent of the wholesale selling price of each gallon of gasoline. The Commonwealth reserves 15 percent of the tax for distribution to municipalities in two ways: one half under the "cherry sheet" (the colloguial name for the form used by the State to list estimated receipts and charges for community fund transfers) and one half to "Chapter 90" improvements, as described below.

STATE AID-CHERRY SHEET DISTRIBUTIONS. Highway-related aid on the "cherry sheet" is reimbursement to the community for the cost it incurs in constructing, maintaining, and policing its roads. In order to receive these funds, the chief local elected official must certify to the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (MDPW) that costs have been appropriated for these items by the municipality. The amount which your community receives in allocation is determined from information collected by the MDPW.

STATE AID - CHAPTER 90. These funds may be used for "construction, reconstruction, and improvements on all approved public ways which qualify under the State Aid Highway guidelines. Improvements can include resurfacing, preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, shoulders, side road approaches, landscaping and tree planting, roadside drainage, structures, sidewalks, traffic control and service facilities, street lighting and surface treatments.

Payments of "Chapter 90" funds are 100 percent or 75 percent reimbursements to the community for costs which have been specifically approved by the MDPW in advance.

For further information contact:

Mr. Thomas Queenan
State Aid to Cities and Towns
MDPW
100 Nashua Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 727-4775

28. SELF-HELP CONSERVATION GRANT PROGRAM
State/EOEA

This program, administered by Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Division of Concervation Services, assists municipalities in acquiring land for conservation and passive recreation purposes. It provides for the 80 percent reimbursement of funds actually expended by a municipality to acquire land for conservation or passive recreation. Any development costs must be absorbed by the municipality. The Conservation Commission of a municipality is the eligible applicant for the program.

The Urban Self-Help Grant Program, administered by the Parks and Recreation Department of EOEA, provides similar funding for municipalities with a population of over 35,000.

For further information contact:

Mr. Joel Lerner, Director
Division of Conservation Services
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-1552

29. REPAIR AND REHABILITATION OF WATER SYSTEMS: CHAPTER 805
State/EOEA

This program will provide $10 million in 50 percent matching grants to communities and water districts, five percent of which will go toward leak detection programs, the remaining 95 percent for the rehab or replacement of water mains, laterals and associated distribution elements. In addition only five percent or $500,000 can go to any one community or district. The Department of Environmental Quality Engineering has established criteria for receipt of grants which include a community's unaccounted for water usage, the institution of an ongoing leak detection program, water pressure for fire protection, and the institution of a comprehensive water resources management program. All Massachusetts communities and water districts are eligible to apply.

For further information contact:

Thomas Doucette
Department of Environmental Quality Engineering
1 Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 292-5500

30. SEWER COLLECTION SYSTEM GRANTS: CHAPTER 557
State/DWPC

This program provides funds to construct sewer systems for which federal aid is not available. Grants are to be made in an amount not to exceed 40 percent of the eligible construction cost or $1 million, whichever is less. Grants are made in accordance with a priority system established under Division of Water Pollution Control regulations.

With respect to economic benefit projects, only projects that assist in creating or retaining long-term employment opportunities will be considered for funding. Any Massachusetts city or town is eligible to apply.

For further information contact:

Mr. Thomas McMahon
Director of Water Pollution Control
1 Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3855

Mr. John Loehr (Economic Benefit Programs)
EOCD
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202
(617) 727-7130

31. SEWAGE TREATMENT CONSTRUCTION GRANTS: SECTION 201
Federal - State/EPA-DWPC

This program provides federal and state funding on a matching basis for planning, design, and construction of sewers and for sewage treatment plants. The State Division of Water Pollution Control administers the "201" program. Under the terms of the program, the Environmental Protection Agency pays for 75 percent of project cost, and state and local government share the remainder on a 15 percent-10 percent basis.

All Massachusetts cities and towns are eligible for the "201" program.

For further information contact:

Mr. Thomas McMahon, Director
Division of Water Pollution Control
1 Winter Street
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3855

MEETING MINUTES

SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF 23 SEPTEMBER 1981

Meeting called to order at 8:10 a.m. by chairman Wendell.

-Matching Grant-

Ms. Robbin Peach and Mr. Michael Oman of MAPC discussed the utility and desirability of having the town provide $2,600.00 to the study for the purpose of covering some of the costs related to printing of documents, maps, posters, and other materials. Mr. Gilberti raised the question of raising the funds from sources other than town government. Ms. Peach said that the committee is free to select a method of fund raising which it finds appropriate. Mrs. Hadley then asked if some members would like to form a fund raising committee for which she would volunteer. Mr. Wendell suggested that committee members defer establishing a fund raising committee until a later time during the meeting.

In-Kind Service

Ms. Peach discussed the basic services expected from the town and committee as contributary services. They are:

1. Sending mailings/meeting minutes/meeting notices - Mr. Dufresne, Town Planner, said that his department would perform these services for the committee.

2. Traffic Counts - Mr. Frank Flood said that the Transportation Advisory committee could volunteer some help in counting traffic. Also, Chairman Wendell said that the South Acton Improvement Association would help.

3. Surveys - Mr. Tolman said he would distribute approximately 15 surveys to South Acton businesses.

4. Maps - Mr. Dufresne said that he would try to supply whatever maps the committee may need.

Subcommittee Formation

Public Relations/Fund Raising
Subcommittee: Mrs. Hadley, Mrs. Spencer and Chairman Wendell volunteered to serve on this subcommittee. Responsibilities of this subcommittee will be to issue press releases and other public information notices and to raise funds from private and public sources to supplement the MAPC grant award.

General Subcommittee: the committee decided not to form specialized subcommittees to guide land use, urban design, wastewater, and traffic and parking planning efforts but rather to form one

general subcommittee where interested committee members would have an opportunity for input on all of the issues to be discussed. It was agreed that those members who have expressed an interst in one particular issue, ie: land use, for example, would be expected to attend all general subcommitee meetings where land use issues are to be discussed. It was also agreed that general subcommittee meeting agenda's would be highly focused and issue specific.

Work Program

Ms Peach presented a "Proposed Work Program," a copy of which is incorporated herein, to the committee. Ms. Peach briefly explained the program and noted that it is a flexible program where changes can be made in the program during the course of the planning project.

Chairman Wendell requested that Ms. Peach and Mr. Oman submit to the committe an outline and scope of the work which MAPC expects to complete within its $26,000.00 budget. Chairman Wendell felt that such an outline would be helpful in defining realistic goals for the project. Ms. Peach and Mr. Oman said that they would submit such an outline at the next committee meeting.

Next Committee Meeting

The committee decided to schedule a meeting on 21 October 1981 at 8:00 a.m. at the Town Hall.

_____
Clerk

AJD/rc

0823A 0010A

MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 21, 1981

CALL TO ORDER: 8:05 a.m. by Chairman Wendell

TOWN MANAGER

Mrs. Banks, Acton's Town Manager, was present to introduce herself to the committee and voice her support for them.

NEW MEMBER

Mr. Keith Man was present to express his interest in the committee and in representing the church community.

Mr. Wendell will make a recommendation to the Selectmen that Mr. Man become a member of the Committee.

ASSETS & PROBLEMS

Mrs. Peach distributed a list of South Acton's assets and problems. As the group reviewed the list they added more specific items.
Assets were: Residents represent a diversity of income ranges; the river is an asset for sources if power and recreation; the old railroad station has historical assets and has potential for many uses; the cow path streets pose assets and problems; Exchange Hall is an asset; Great Hill recreation area poses assets and problems, it was felt that organized leagues take up too much time on the fields.
Problems were: The Bridge poses a problem both architecturally and structurally; traffic problems, the curve after the bridge and the School Street intersection; also Digital traffic; parking; wastewater; pedestrian hazards; streetscape settings; lighting; access to the train; deteriorating buildings.

USES OF THE SOUTH ACTON AREA

The committee discussed the question as to what this area should become; office, residential or village shops or a combination. There seemed to be more support for the village, shops and residential type area. Mrs. Peach pointed out that this may be more desirable, but it may be harder to accomplish. The committee members were asked to come next week prepared to

discuss this question of "use" further, to establish a focus for the revitalization effort. Also they were asked to be prepared to discuss their feelings on how historic preservation and wastewater problems could fit into their focus.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Now and Then donated $100.00
Act on Historical Society donated $100.00
Hairport donated $100.00

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:05 a.m.

_____
Clerk

MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OCTOBER 28, 1981

CALL TO ORDER: 8:10 a.m. by Chairman Wendell

MINUTES

The minutes of October 21, 1981 were approved as amended by the Committee

CLERK

The Committee voted Mr. John Erikson as clerk of the committee. He will sign all minutes and official documents.

VISITOR

Mr. Mike LaFoley was a visitor to the meeting today.

DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE FOCUS

Septic Problem: Mr. Oman of M.A.P.C. discussed with the committee a sewer system which could possibly be used for the South Acton area. The system would cost approximately $520,000.00 (including the leaching area) and then the yearly cost of approximately $500.00 would be charged to each user of the system. Mr. Oman made it clear to the committee that his figures were very preliminary in nature and further study would be required to develop more accurate costs. Also, the committee requested that Mr. Oman investigate the possibility and feasibility of tying into the Maynard sewer system.

As a result of discussion and feelings from each committee member it became clear that addressing the septic problem is a high priority of the study.

Committee members voiced their opinions about what they would like to see the village center become. The majority felt that a mixture of village business, offices and residential uses were most appropriate. There was an emphasis on preserving the historical character and building an adequate sewer system for South Acton.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:06 a.m.

_____
John Erikson,
Clerk

rc
0900A/0010A

SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 9, 1981

RESULTS OF SEPTIC/SEWER INVESTIGATION

M.A.P.C. representative Mike Oman updated the committee on the study of the South Acton sewer situation. After talking with Mr. Calichman, Acton's Health Director it appears that a feasible solution to the sewer problem would be to properly repair the septic systems that are in need of repair. It would be more cost effective to the residents of South Acton to maintain present systems than to invest in a new large sewer system.

A question was raised as to whether this strategy would discourage business investment in South Acton?

MARKETING ANALYSIS FORMAT

M.A.P.C. representative Robbin Peach discussed the different studies that are being conducted to better understand the way in which South Acton can be used. ie: supply and demand study for office and commercial space; a study of similar revitalized areas in surrounding towns; traffic and parking study; study of Iron Work Farm and the Jones Tavern.

Ms. Peach mentioned that the kind of busineses that seem to survive in South Acton are one of a specialty such as the Music Store or Erikson Grain which attract local and regional customers. Mrs. Howe suggested that maybe these are the kind of businesses which South Acton would want to seek out for this area.

S.A.V.E.

Prudence Spencer and Mary Hadley reported that $610.00 has been raised so far. They would like to hear from more organizations and will accept any kind of contribution large or small.

They will be sending a fund raising letter to 25 businesses in the area. They need $2,600.00 to meet their goal.

NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Board of Selectmen have appointed Mr. Keith Mann to the S.A.R.C.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the 28 October 1981 meeting were approved.

The Minutes of the 23 September 1981 and 21 October 1981 meetings were signed by John Erikson.

NEXT MEETING

The Next S.A.R.C. meeting is tentatively scheduled for 13 January 1982.

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John Erikson

RC —
1060A/0100A

MEETING MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
JANUARY 13, 1982

Call to Order: 8:10 a.m.

Z.B.L. Rewrite

Mr. Dufresne wrote a letter to Ms. Peach (and passed copies to the committee) concerning Acton's 1982 Zoning Bylaw rewrite. He asked the MAPC representatives and the S.A.R.C. members to submit their suggestions or recommendations concerning parking, lot coverage, building setback, landscaping provisions etc... prior to the end of January.

S.A.V.E.

Ms. Spencer reported that there have been 3 personal contributions this month from: Castilline, Scofield and Bunce.

The committee is having an "S.A.V.E. South Acton Village" bumper sticker printed and will sell them for $1.00 each.

Mr. Keith Mann of South Acton Congregational Church will take 50.

Traffic Study

Mark Siegenthaler of MAPC presented the committee with a traffic analysis of South Acton. The main focus of the study was on the Main and School Street intersections and the railroad bridges which are primarily responsible for causing traffic problems. MAPC recommends that the committee persue bridge reconstuction plans that will regrade the existing bridges, and intersection plans that will re-design and signalize School Street and Main Street. Mr. Dufresne will ask Mr. Herrick, Town Engineer, if he would discuss this recommendation with the committee at next weeks meeting.

MAPC Grants

The Committee reviewed a memo from MAPC stating that MAPC has received a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to provide assistance to communities in historic preservation activities. MAPC is seeking communities who are interested in this assistance. Ms. Peach encourages the committee to seek help from MAPC for preparing a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. She understands that this could provide some tax breaks for registered buildings. The committee agreed that this might be a good idea and will send a letter to MAPC but will stress that much of the groundwork for some of these historic activities has already been started by the Acton Historical Commission. There were some questions and reservations among the committee concerning how many restrictions would apply to properties in a

local and federal historic district. Ms. Peach will ask Rick Shea if he will come to the next meeting to discuss this program with the Committee. Mrs. Hadley said she would contact the Acton Historical Commission about these issues.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 20th.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:15 a.m.

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John Erikson

rc
1103A/0100A

TOWN OF ACTON

Inter-Departmental Communication

DATE: February 4, 1982

TO: South Acton Revitalization Committee Members

FROM: Armand J. Dufresne, Town Planner

SUBJECT: Agenda for meeting of February 17, 1982

Dear Members:

The February 17 meeting has been called to further discuss the issues concerning the Main Street bridge in South Acton.

It is my understanding that the South Acton Improvement Association (represented on our Committee by Bart Wendell) held a recent meeting to discuss the South Acton bridge situation. Apparently, Mr. John Loring, State Representative, addressed the South Acton group at that meeting. In short, Mr. Loring suggested an alternative construction design concept concerning the bridge. The concept fowards the proposition that this Committee investigate the possibility of lowering the railroad tracks and consequently radically lower the grade of the bridge while maintaining appropriate clearance height for trains passing under the bridge. In addition, it appears that this concept (outlined here in abbreviated form) was found appealing by the South Acton Improvement Association. I have since discussed the feasability of the concept with the MAPC planners and with our own Engineering Dept. The Engineering Dept.'s view is that this type of a project will be extremely expensive (perhaps in the multi-millions of dollars), environmentally difficult (the water table is very high under the tracks and the brook is very near the tracks), and that it could create practical problems with the existing train station. On the other hand, if the project were approved by the MBTA (which would appear to be in the distant future, if at all), this concept would be extremely beneficial to South Acton center from a traffic and perhaps a marketing perspective.

Therefore, discussions with various individuals has left me (and others) to conclude that all the issues concerning the bridge problem need to be finally resolved through a thorough discussion and reexamination of all proposals during the February 17, 1982 meeting in order for work on this project to proceed on schedule.

Your attendance at this meeting is very important. I'll be looking forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Armand

Armand J. Dufresne,
Town Planner

SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 1982

Mrs. Hadley convened the meeting at 8:10 a.m. Committee members discussed the merits of a recommendation submitted through the South Acton Improvement Association recommending that the town attempt to lower the railroad tracks in the South Acton area as a means of minimizing the grade changes on Main Street and providing adequate clearance for trains passing under the bridge. Committee members debated the probable impacts of such a project. Mr. Gilberti noted that he had concerns about the possible negative environmental impacts to Fort Pond Brook while other committee members were concerned about the financial costs and the probability of having such a project accepted by the MBTA and Mass. D.P.W.

The committee felt that it had to resolve the design issues concerned with the bridge so that MAPC could proceed with its planning efforts. As a result Mr. Gilberti moved that:

> The Committee request that MAPC use their bridge rehabilitaton design which they have presented as their basic design criteria. Further, that they then include in their report two long term projects: First, eliminating the bridge, and second lowering the tracks. The Committee has concluded that the two long-range projects are a key element to the total rehabilitation of South Acton Bridge.
>
> This motion was seconded by Mr. Mercurio and accepted by unanimous vote of the committee.

Committee members discussed the feasibility of painting yellow traffic lines on School Street near its intersection with Main Street. Committee members said that this intersection had yellow directional traffic lines in the past and that these lines could be potentially very helpful to motorists using the intersection. Ms. Howe said that she would discuss having the yellow lines painted with the Board of Selectmen and report her findings to the committee at the next meeting.

The meeting minutes for the January 20, 1982 meeting were unanimously approved by the committee. Motion to approve made by Ms. Thompson, second by Mr. Wendell. The minutes were then signed by Mr. Erikson.

The committee selected March 17, 1982 at 8:00 a.m. for their next committee meeting date.

Meeting adjourned: 9:10 a.m.

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John Erikson

AJD/rc
1212A/0100A

MEETING MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 24, 1982

CALL TO ORDER: 8:05 a.m.

MINUTES

MOVED by Mrs. Hadley to approve the minutes of February 17, 1982, all in favor.

MARKETING ANALYSIS

Mike Oman, representing Aggie Baker, reviewed Ms. Baker's Marketing Analysis report with the committee. Comparing Acton with its surrounding towns Ms. Baker listed population and housing growth between 1970 and 1980, population projections up until 1990 and income, employment, retail and service trends. In comparing Acton with these surrounding towns she shows positive trends in growth and marketing.

Next Ms. Baker listed the Selected Overall Competition in the area and presented corresponding map layout showing the shopping areas surrounding South Acton which would pose competition. Mrs. Howe voiced some concern over some inaccuracies in this report. She stated that it appears that Ms. Baker hasn't studied the Acton area thoroughly in person. Mr. Oman said that even though there are a few errors and some of the information may be dated, that it really shouldn't effect the overall findings.

The next section of the report defined the three general types of commercial districts which are: Neighborhood Center, Community Center and Regional Center. She concluded that South Acton would fit into the Neighborhood Shopping Center category. Ms. Baker then lists the market constraints, market assets and her recommendations for South Acton. She suggests to 1) seek Historic District designation; 2) to encourage the development of office space; 3) to attract neighborhood type retailors; specifically a general store, a craft shop and a tack shop might be appropriate for South Acton.

Mr. Oman suggested that small scale marketing improvements could be a good start for making South Acton feel and look like a village center again. Improvements such as a traffic light, pedestrian access, streetscaping, lighting, planting, and street furnishings could make a considerable difference in providing a saleable environment for new businesses and shoppers.

Mr. Oman also presented the option of locating the business center away from the historical center and possibly developing the railroad parking lot area.

The Group voiced their concern over the fact that they already knew the contents of this report. They asked that there be a follow up to this report with more specific information of what is available and what the costs would be.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 9:15 a.m.

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John Erikson

rc

MEETING MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
MAY 5, 1982

CALL TO ORDER: 8:15 a.m.

GRANT APPLICATION FOR SOUTH & WEST ACTON

Mr. Dufresne briefly reviewed with the committee the pre-application for a Massachusetts Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program.

LAND USE & PARKING RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Peach of MAPC presented ideas and recommendations which MAPC has drafted for South Acton center.

They recommended that Acton purchase the parcel of land from the Acton Civil Defence building to the old railroad station. They also felt that the old Post Office had possible commercial potential as well as potential for providing parking area space.

For urban design improvements Ms. Peach suggested that the #1 priority should be the installation of new sidewalks and some flowering street trees. She also suggested landscaping building fronts which presently lack landscaping. She felt that this landscaping could help improve the image of the center.

Mrs. Hadley had a question as to whether planting flowering trees in in the interest of preserving the area's historic image. Ms. Peach said that she would research this question.

Mrs. Peach said that at the next meeting she will present the committee with detailed designs for revitalizing the South Acton area. She will need the Committee's approval of these designs.

ADJOURNED: 9:10 a.m.

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John Erikson

rc
1647A

MEETING MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
JUNE 2, 1982

CALL TO ORDER: 8:10 a.m.

MAPC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROJECT AND COMMITTEE APPROVAL

MAPC presented to the Committee a map and drawings highlighting their recommendations for revitalizing South Acton. Included were drawings of storefront improvements, redesigned intersections, parking areas, renovated sidewalks and extensive landscaping designs. The Committee was also presented with a memo listing a summary of MAPC's recommendations.

Ms. Peach asked for the Committee's approval of these semi-final recommendations. She also asked the Committee in what form do they want the final recommendations to be documented. She suggested either a "poster and memorandum" package or a "long form" 40 page report.

The Committee expressed some concerns and reservations with this semi final report. They decided after some discussion that they would return to the next meeting scheduled for July 9th with their own specific recommendations for MAPC to incorporate into the final report. They would also return with their recommendation as to which form the documentation of the report should take.

ADJOURNED: 9:15

John Erikson

rc
1647A

MEETING MINUTES
SOUTH ACTON REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
JUNE 9, 1982

CALL TO ORDER: 8:05 a.m.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS TO MAPC FOR FINAL REPORT

Committee members presented their final recommendations to MAPC. Members suggested that the following recommendations be included: renovation of South Acton Bridge; tying the Great Hill Conservation area in with South Acton; potential aesthetic, recreational and conservation value of the railroad grade and Mill Pond area; a list of steps the committee can follow in working towards the implementation of MAPC's recommendations; possibility of tying the Mill Pond area into the Historical District; encourage the promotion of low interest loans to imporve septic systems; sidewalks which could connect such facilities as the Childrens Discovery Museum; emphasis on 3 focal points 1) Exchange Hall, 2) old train station and 3) Jones Tavern; and the possibility of bicycle paths.

The Committee chose to have the final report drawn up in "poster and memorandum" form. They felt that this would be the best way to attract interest and communicate with the public on the basic plans drafted by the committee.

ADJOURNED: 9:15

John Erikson

rc
1647A